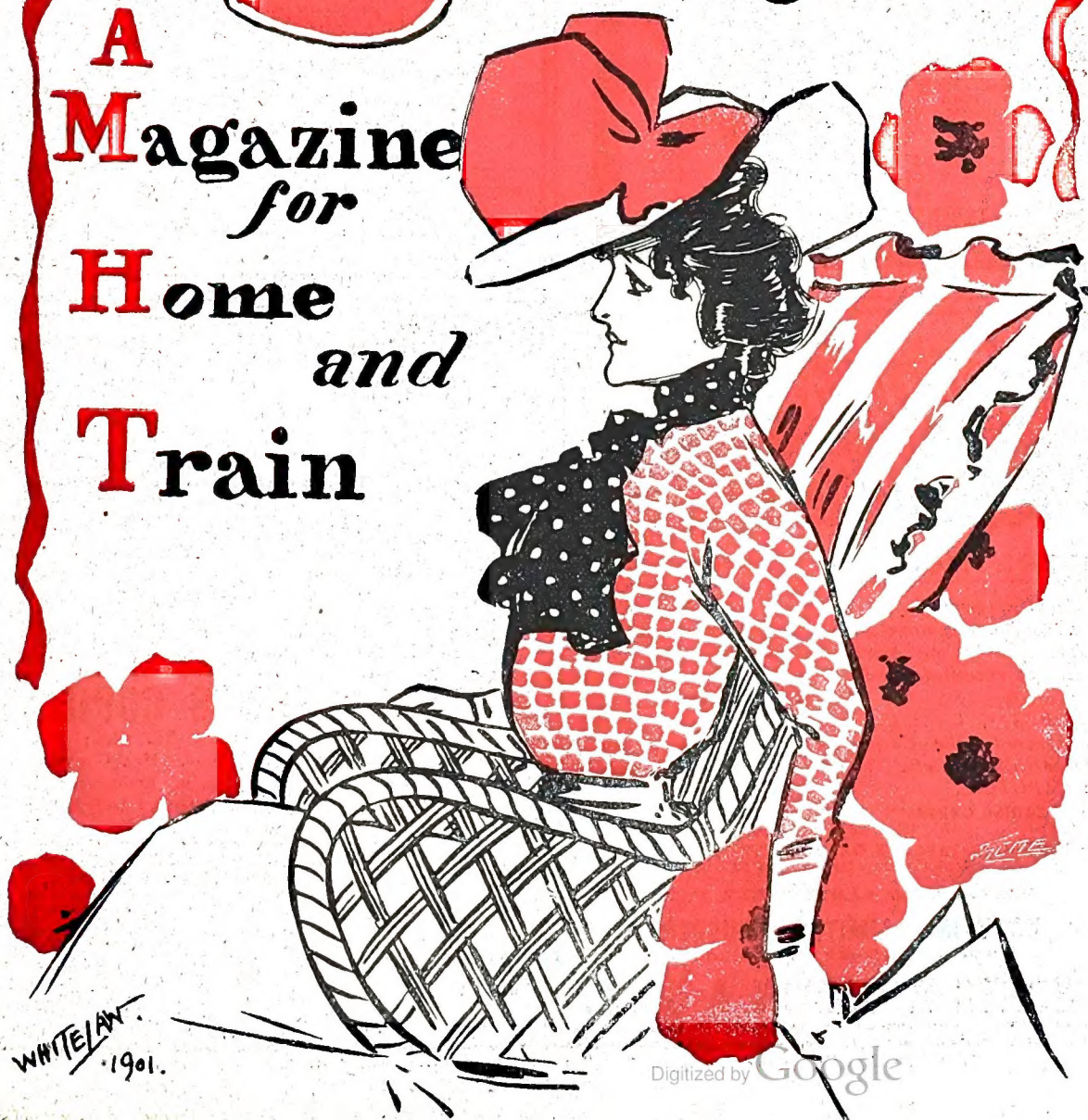


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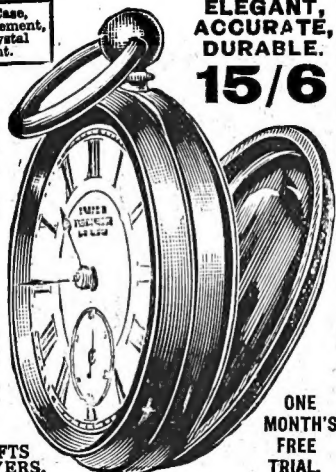
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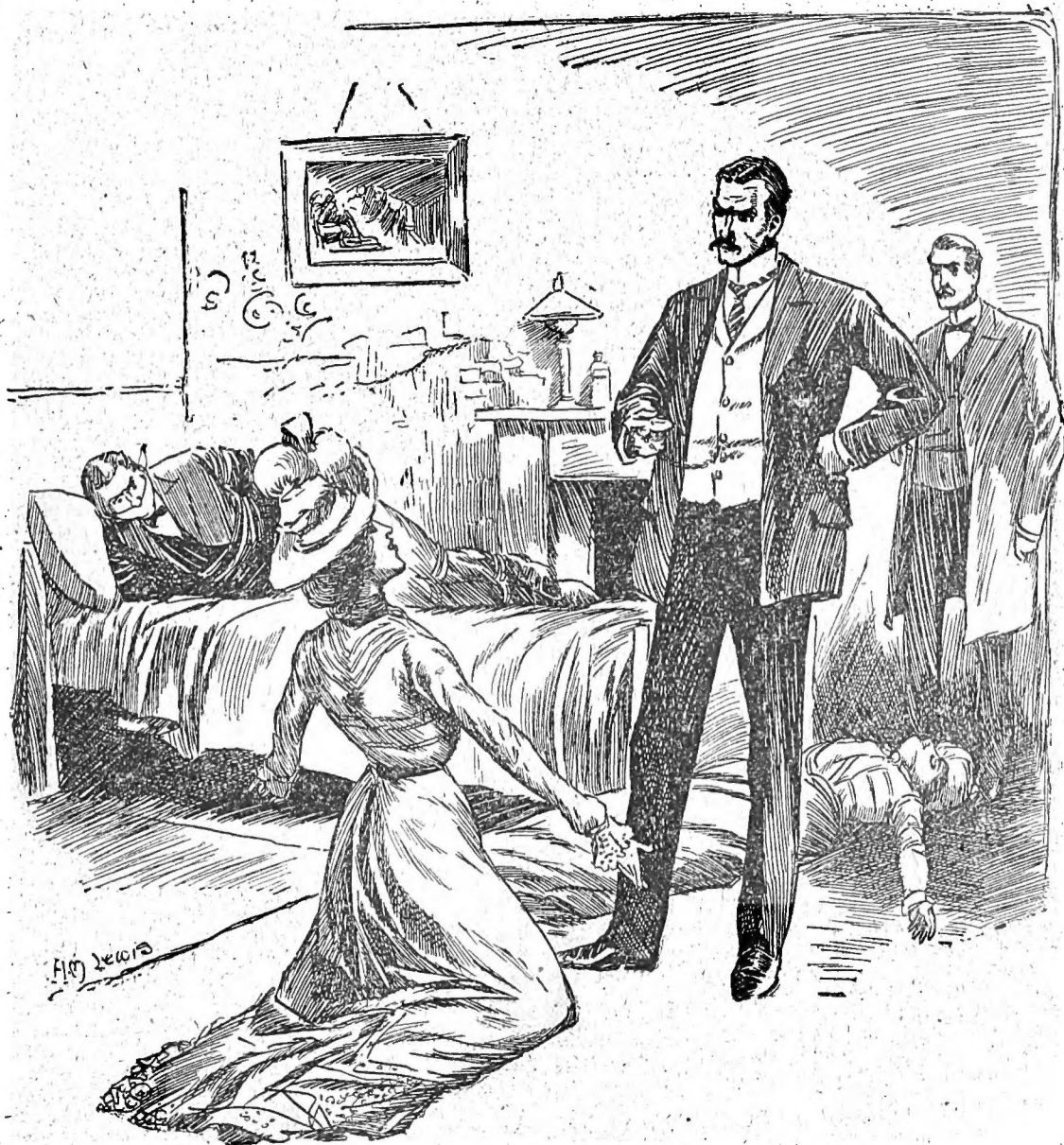
SHORT STORIES.

No. 663.]

For the Week Ending September 14th, 1901.

[ONE PENNY.]

The Adventures of an Actress.



Hazel flung herself down on her knees before her tormenter.

A THRILLING INSTALMENT.

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

VI.—Within an Ace.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

FRESH from the terrible experience at Newcastle, the *Good Samaritan* Company arrived duly at Rugby in accordance with the programme that had already been worked out for their tour. It was Monday morning; the actors and actresses were already assembled on the stage of the Theatre Royal in the town. At the wings were standing Raymond Venables, the manager; Hazel Harlow, his leading lady; and Eric Monteith, the new recruit, who thus found himself preparing for his first rehearsal.

"I hope you are word-perfect, Monteith," said the manager. "Without any disparagement, it's a good thing for you that poor Carruthers had such a small part. One doesn't pick up the tricks of the trade all at once, unless you happen to be a genius like Miss Harlow here."

Hazel bowed with a laugh.

"Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Venables," she said. And so they proceeded to rehearse.

To Eric's relief the play proceeded comparatively smoothly. Nevertheless, he was somewhat nervous when the evening came and it was seen that the house was full. This was undoubtedly due to Hazel Harlow's beautiful personality, together with the desire evinced by the citizens of Rugby to see the heroine of the Newcastle Theatre fire.

The young actress received a tremendous ovation on her first appearance, and it was some minutes before she was able to utter her opening sentences.

Venables was jubilant. "It seems rather a heartless thing to say," he muttered to Monteith, who was standing in the wings waiting for his cue, "but that affair at Newcastle seems likely to prove a godsend to us."

Eric made no answer. He could not forget how the girl whom he loved with all his heart and soul, who was at that moment receiving the vociferous plaudits of the audience, had been within an ace of a fearful death, and he knew that of which Venables could have no inkling, how this same girl, who had never wronged a human being in her life, was beset by perils and difficulties that were all the more poignant by reason of their very subtlety.

"If only I could get her to give up the stage," ran Eric's thoughts, "to become my wife, to give me and me alone the privilege of guarding all evil from her head. If only I could awake in her an answering chord to my own love;

perhaps in time she will come to care for me. I have one consolation, that she is at least heart-whole; and yet therein lies perhaps the greatest danger to my hopes. She may suddenly fall in love with somebody who is better looking and more attractive than I am, and then good-bye to all hope of happiness for Eric Monteith."

It was not long before Eric discovered that there was nothing more likely to jar all the finer susceptibilities of a man of refinement than life in a travelling company. His brother actors, chief among whom were men who hid their real identity under the names of Clive Pendennis, Ralph Garden, and Hayward Lindsay, were good-hearted Bohemians enough, but it was their very Bohemianism that seemed most offensive to Eric, steeped in the traditions of Eton and Oxford. They were continually pressing him to come and have a drink, always dilating on the charms of this or that maiden, chaffing him with being so "mashed" on Hazel Harlow, and when he showed resentment at such familiarity their surprise was unbounded, and in consequence he became a topic of contemptuous conversation among them.

The ladies of the company, with the exception of Jenny Lovelace, made love to him and tried to blacken Hazel's reputation in his eyes. Needless to say he would hear no word against her, neither did he reciprocate their amatory advances made to him. With Raymond Venables, the manager, he was on a somewhat different footing; he knew that Venables had power to dismiss him, he knew also that the manager, despite his cynical attitude, was madly in love with Hazel, and looked upon himself as a friendly rival. Thus he knew it was all-important for the furtherance of his object in keeping a protecting eye over Hazel to remain on good terms with Venables.

One morning he was sitting in his lodgings smoking somewhat gloomily and musing the while over his present life and the "might-have-been" could Hazel Harlow have been persuaded to abandon her career as an actress and become his wife. Suddenly there came a knock at the door. "Come in," cried Eric. His landlady entered with a card in her hand, which she laid down upon the table with the remark, "There's a young man downstairs what would like to see you; there's his name on the card."

Eric took up the little piece of pasteboard with languid curiosity: "Mr. Geoffrey Phelps," he read.

Hazel Harlow is in Rugby this week.

"Geoffrey Phelps," he repeated. "I don't know the name." Then to the landlady: "Ask him to come up, will you?"

The landlady retired, and going to the head of the stairs bawled in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the house, "You're to come up." It was evident that the woman didn't believe in showing undue civility to such a person as a travelling actor.

The sound of quick, lithe footsteps coming up the stairs showed that the invitation had been accepted.

The next moment a man stood inside the room—a brown-moustached, well set-up young fellow, with shrewd, rather deep-set dark eyes, evidently a gentleman.

Eric rose as his visitor entered. "To what must I owe the honour of this visit?" he said courteously.

The young man hesitated for a few seconds. "You are Mr. Eric Monteith, I believe?" he then said. Monteith nodded.

"And you are at present a member of Raymond Venables' theatrical company now performing in this town?" Again Monteith responded with a nod. "And you are a friend and well-wisher of Miss Hazel Harlow, who is playing the lead?"

In a moment all Eric's faculties leapt up to renewed alertness. The mention of Hazel's name acted like magic. The stranger's keen eyes were fixed upon him intently. "And if I am?" demanded Eric incisively, "what then?"

"It is rather a peculiar business," continued the other, picking his words with great deliberation. "We are both strangers to one another, and I am a stranger to Miss Harlow, except, of course, that I know what all the world knows, that she is a beautiful and accomplished young actress, and that but for you she might have lost her life at Newcastle last week. You must know, then, that I happened last night to stop at a little wayside public-house just outside Rugby. The landlord of the inn was a curious, nervous sort of man, who evidently had something on his mind that he wanted to get rid of. I was the only occupant of the bar at the time, and at last the fellow leant across his counter and said to me: 'Look here, sir, you seem a gentleman, I'm in a bit of a hole, and I want you to help me. An hour or so back an elderly man, a farmer by the look of him, came in here looking ghastly white. He asked for some brandy, which I gave him, and he then asked if I had a room where he could stay the night. I said yes, showed him to a bedroom, and left him. In an hour or so my servant came to me and said that the gentleman upstairs was making a great noise.'

"I went up and found the man lying on his bed fast asleep as it seemed, and talking quickly to himself. I listened to what he was saying, and after a bit I began to realise that he was ill, in a fever or something, and more than that, that I had hit upon a mystery that might have serious consequences to more people than one."

The young man paused. Eric had listened to him with growing interest. He was a good *raconteur*, and his story came so glibly and readily from his lips that it had a ring of verisimilitude that left no room but to believe that he spoke the truth.

"As far as I can remember," went on the young man, "the ravings from the delirious farmer as repeated to me by the inn-keeper were as follows: 'I have got within sight of her at last; I'll teach her to run away from home; I'll teach her to make the name of Harlow sound in everyone's mouth as a brazen actress woman;

if she won't listen to me I'll kill her, aye, even though she be my own daughter; and if I can't settle her, well Squire Caldecott can!' This the fellow said, and a lot more beside. I saw him myself; he's a grizzle-haired, truculent looking old man, and he's at present lying low in that solitary inn concocting Heaven knows what plans."

"Well, I said to myself, it's no good my going and frightening Miss Hazel Harlow with this yarn. I'd better find out someone who she trusts and who can be trusted to do what's best for her. Of course I don't know the ins and outs of the story; perhaps you can supply the details."

As can be well imagined the effect of this story on Eric Monteith was electrifying. "It's perfectly true," he said eagerly, "Miss Harlow is the daughter of a reprobate old farmer. From what I know of him I think he would leave no stone unturned to do his daughter an injury. It's very good of you, sir, a stranger"—he went on impulsively—"to take so much trouble on her behalf. The question is, what's to be done now?"

The other made a deprecating gesture. "It's not a question of *trouble*," he answered. "Anyone else would have done the same in my place, and if I might make a suggestion it would be that you came back to the inn with me and interviewed the old fellow yourself. You could then take him unawares before he has time to make himself nasty. Personally, I think he was suffering from nothing more nor less than an overdose of alcohol. That would account for his feverish ravings."

There was truth in every word that the young man uttered. Eric felt this. No suspicion of anything wrong crossed his mind; the frankness with which Mr. Geoffrey Phelps had unburdened his mind of his story disarmed any initiatory suspicion that Monteith might have had.

He seized his hat, and said with alacrity: "Let us go at once; I am quite of your opinion that it would be as well to strike while the iron is hot."

"Then come along," said the other. "We shall walk there in half-an-hour. I think if you show the old reprobate that any attack on Miss Harlow will mean prompt action on the part of the police, he will have to lower his colours, and you can count on me to back you up in any way you like."

CHAPTER II.

THE "Jolly Waggoners" is a small hostelry just outside Rugby. It is off the main road, and is usually only a house of call for the farm hands and pedestrians that happen to pass along that way. It is a pretty old-fashioned place, covered with climbing roses and clematis, and it looked particularly pretty on that bright September morning when Eric and his unknown companion came within sight of it.

"I wonder how Harlow came to find his way to such an out-of-the-world place?" queried Monteith. "I should have thought that he would have made his way to the 'Royal George,' or some place in the town itself."

"It strikes me that's another proof of his artfulness," replied the other; "he knew that no one would be likely to look for him in such an out-of-the-way place as this."

"True," said Eric, "and as he has lived in the Midlands all his life, perhaps he knows this part of the world pretty well."

Further conversation between the pair was cut short by their arrival at the door of the inn. Phelps strolled inside the bar with the air of a man conversant with his surroundings. There were one or two labourers drink-

Hazel Harlow will be in Belfast next week.

ing home-brewed, but beyond them no one save the landlord, who was leaning bare-armed across the counter. To him Phelps nodded significantly.

"You'll have a glass of ale with me," he said to Monteith; and then, in a lower voice, "we'd better wait till these country louts have cleared out before coming to business."

There was nothing in this proposal which struck Eric

dimensions, that he ordered the originators of it to leave the inn. This, with much scuffling and many oaths they did, apparently to continue their quarrel outside.

Eric laughed and turned round. "A storm in a teacup," he said, "I suppose fighting's in the blood with these fellows."

Phelps smiled. "That's it," he said; "and now let's drink our beer and get to business. Is the old chap still upstairs?" he said to the landlord. He nodded. "Yes, and pretty quiet now," he said. Phelps raised his tankard. "I'll give you a toast," he said in a low voice, "let us drain our pewters to Miss Hazel Harlow, and a speedy confounding of all her enemies."

Eric raised his mug in silence, his eyes spoke for him; the next moment he had drunk the beer at a draught. He set the vessel down with a wry face. "I don't think much of your beer, landlord," he said.

"Don't you, sir?" came the answer. "It comes from Burton. It ought to be good."

Phelps tapped Eric lightly on the sleeve. "We'd better get upstairs," he said.

The landlord lifted the flap of the bar counter. "Come

this way, gentlemen," he said.

An unaccountable feeling of dizziness suddenly made Eric put out his hand and grip the side of the bar with feverish energy. A parched, dry feeling was in his mouth, the tendons of

his knee-joints seemed to become lax and flabby, a cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead.

"I—I—feel awfully queer," he mumbled. Then his eyes went almost despairingly to Phelps's face, and in the countenance of the latter saw a look that transformed his features entirely, a look of devilish malignity that suddenly gave Eric the knowledge, when it was too late, that he had been tricked.

He made a desperate clutch at Phelps's throat. "Drugged, by Heavens!" he gurgled despairingly, and then he fell forward senseless into the traitor's arms.



"Drugged, by Heavens!" he gurgled despairingly.

as being in any way extraordinary. The landlord drew them two glasses of beer, and set them down on the counter.

Suddenly high words took place between the countrymen, and Eric, wheeling round, saw that there was every prospect of a free fight. As he turned he did not notice that Phelps had taken stealthily from his pocket a tiny phial containing a white powder, the contents of which he deftly emptied into his companion's liquor. The landlord in the meanwhile was so anxious to quell the disturbance that had started before it reached serious

Tell your friends about Hazel Harlow.

When he came to himself it was to experience the utmost weakness and nausea, as though he had been through some terrible illness. His deadened senses refused for a few moments to give him cognisance of where he was or what had happened. A man's face gazing down into his own as he lay bound and helpless upon a bed, brought back realisation with almost soul-sickening directness. There was no mistaking the lineaments of the countenance before him; they were those of Horace Caldecott, the one man in all the world that Eric had reason to hate.

"Good morning, Mr. Monteith," said Caldecott sneeringly, "you didn't bargain to see me, but I think you will confess that it's my innings now. How do you like stage life? How proud Miss Hazel Harlow must be to think that you have given up the attractions of life in London to join a fifth-rate touring company!"

Eric made no answer. A wild fury was seething in his brain. He knew full well the character of the villain who had entrapped him to the inn with so plausible a story and so clever an *aide* as the man who had called himself Geoffrey Phelps. If looks could have killed, Horace Caldecott's last hour had indeed come. Caldecott was not slow to remark the loathing that flashed forth from his captive's eyes.

"Looks don't kill, my friend," he said, "so it's not a bit of good your glaring at me like that. You've got to face the music with myself as leader of the orchestra, and the sooner you realise that the better it will be. You've baulked me twice of Hazel Harlow"—a horrible expression came over his face—"but, by Heaven, you won't do it a third time."

"If you think," said Eric suddenly, "because you have got me into your power by means of such a coward's trick as the one that has just been perpetrated, that you can get me to be the means of bringing Miss Harlow into your clutches, you're mightily mistaken. You can add murder to all your numerous crimes if you will, but I don't see that you will gain much except a halter round your neck by such a course."

"Strange though it may seem," retorted the other carelessly, "I don't care to have all my eggs in one basket. Life is sweet, Mr. Eric Monteith, and I'll admit that I should have but little compunction in putting you out of the way if I thought you were fool enough to try the game of bravado. Now, I'll give you my first proposition. It is that you write a letter to Miss Hazel Harlow, which I shall dictate, asking her to come here. That is the price I put upon your life."

"You need not waste further words," cried Monteith, "I would sooner die a hundred times than be the means of putting Miss Harlow into your clutches. Is that plain enough for you?"

"That is what I expected," came the cool answer; "then I may play the rest of my trumps. Just come here, Geoffrey, will you?"—this to the man Phelps, who had been sitting quietly observant in a far corner of the room.

The other approached the bedside. "Just show Mr. Monteith what you have got," said Caldecott blandly.

Phelps held up a signet ring and a pocket-book, which Eric recognised at once as his own, and which must have been extracted from his person when he was unconscious. "You recognise those?" said Caldecott. "Now I'll tell you what we are going to do, as you won't write a letter. You have already had an opportunity of judging Mr. Phelps power as an actor, you must be moreover acquainted with the soft heart possessed by Miss Hazel

Harlow. Well, by the simple process of putting two and two together, you may now be able to guess my plan of campaign. Mr. Phelps will go to Miss Harlow with your signet ring and your pocket-book to back him up, and will say that you have met with a most grievous accident, as token of which behold your personal effects. Now, according to her own view of the case, Miss Harlow owes you a good deal. Her soft heart will prompt her to at once fly to the aid of the man who has given up so much for her. Now, Mr. Monteith, will you write that letter or will you not?"

"No, a thousand times no," cried Eric, half beside himself with impotent rage. "It shall never be said that I moved a hand of my own accord to help you in the furtherance of your diabolical plans. Do your worst, blackhearted villain that you are!"

Caldecott made a step forward as though he would have struck the defenceless man before him; then his raised hand fell to his side.

"Words don't hurt," he said with a terrible laugh, "and you're not out of the wood yet, not by a long way. You shall have the satisfaction, I promise you, of seeing Miss Harlow here. You shall also have the satisfaction in spite of what you have just said, of knowing that you have been the instrument of giving me what should have been my own long ago. Well, Geoffrey"—turning to his accomplice—"I don't see any reason why we shouldn't go and carry out the rest of the programme."

Eric Monteith's heart seemed to turn to lead within him. He could do nothing—nothing, save look on, a silent and unwilling witness of a base conspiracy. He determined to make one last effort to save Hazel Harlow. Drawing in a long breath he suddenly emitted a piercing scream. In a moment Caldecott had flung himself upon his victim, a gag was thrust in Eric's mouth, and so his last attempt to gain help had been frustrated. Nothing remained now but to watch and wait, to pray that somehow, though in what way Monteith could in no wise speculate, Providence would interpose and prevent the consummation of Caldecott's foul plot.

CHAPTER III.

HAZEL HARLOW and Jenny Lovelace were sitting in their lodgings, which they had taken together, drinking tea.

"I do hope, Hazel," Jenny was saying, "that we shall get away from Rugby without anything terrible happening. Somehow there seems to be an evil destiny hanging round this company."

"Yes," said Hazel sadly, "and I can't help feeling that I am the Jonah who ought to have been thrown overboard; and yet it's through no fault of my own that I can see." Tears gathered in her beautiful eyes.

Jenny put her arms round her companion's neck. "Of course it isn't your fault, dear Hazel," she said impulsively. "You can't help being sweet and good and beautiful, you can't help all the men fluttering round you like moths round a candle. I'm sure if I were a man I wouldn't rest a minute until you promised to marry me."

Hazel smiled through her tears. "I'm sure I wish you were a man," she said, "because I expect I'd marry you then; and yet I don't know. If you were a man I should never have had such a dear friend as Jenny Lovelace."

For "dear friends" the two actresses had indeed

become; the contrast between them was sufficient to account for their friendship. Jenny impulsive, hare-brained, *petite*; Hazel of a quieter nature, gentle, almost statuesque; and, though she knew it not, Hazel had been the means of redeeming Jenny from becoming what is, alas, too common among members of the dramatic profession, lax as regards the finer feelings that are the safeguard of women whose paths do not lie amidst the glare and glitter of the footlights.

At that moment a visitor was announced. It was, in fact, Mr. Geoffrey Phelps, "desirous of seeing Miss Harlow alone, on very important business." The two girls exchanged glances at this message. "Do you know this Mr. Phelps, Hazel?" whispered Jenny eagerly.

"No," answered the other, "I never heard of him in my life."

"Then don't see him alone; let me stay here and hear what he has to say." And so when Mr. Phelps was ushered up into Hazel's apartment, it was to be confronted by two maidens instead of one.

"Have I the honour of addressing Miss Hazel Harlow?" he began blandly.

"I am Miss Harlow," answered Hazel coldly "May I ask what you want with me?"

Phelps hesitated. He had not bargained for the presence of a third party; and yet he felt that to withhold the bogus message he was bound to deliver, would create suspicion as to its *bonâ fides*, for if Eric Monteith were lying stricken and wounded there could be no possible reason for making a mystery of the occurrence. He began to wish that Caldecott had hit upon some other plan. All this passed through his mind at lightning speed; his hesitation was only momentary. There was no help for it, the third person must hear what he had to say. He looked inquiringly at Jenny to cover his hesitation.

"This is Miss Lovelace," said Hazel, "you need have no hesitation in saying what you have to say before her."

Phelps bowed. He determined to rush hot-foot into his tale.

"I come from a Mr. Eric Monteith," he said quickly, "a gentleman whose acquaintance I had not the pleasure of knowing until an hour or so ago. I happened to be passing a little wayside inn just outside Rugby when I became the witness of a most unfortunate accident; a gentleman was knocked down by a runaway horse and injured rather severely, particularly about the head and right hand. I helped to carry him into the inn. When



"Have I the honour of addressing Miss Hazel Harlow?" he began blandly.

Hazel Harlow is in Rugby this week.

he recovered consciousness he told me that his name was Mr. Monteith, and that he was a member of the *Good Samaritan Company*, at present playing in Rugby. He gave me your address, and asked me if I would come to you and ask you to go to him in his hour of need. As voucher for his identity—he could not write by reason of his hand being injured—he gave me this signet ring and pocket-book that he said he believed you would recognise as his property."

The two girls listened to the plausible villain's story with breathless interest. The signet ring and the pocket-book were beyond all doubt and question Monteith's. To clinch his story Phelps spoke again.

"Mr. Monteith informed me," he said in a low voice, "that you were some time ago the victim of a letter purporting to be written by himself, but in which he had no hand. He told me this to reassure you."

This put the finishing touch to Hazel's credence in the story. Even Jenny, more worldly-minded and sophisticated than her comrade, ready moreover to see danger in the most ordinary things where Hazel was concerned, had to confess to herself that she could find no flaw in the tissue of Phelps's narrative.

Hazel sprang to her feet. "Let us go at once," she cried impetuously. "Poor Mr. Monteith, he must be terribly hurt."

"I think it only wise," put in Phelps sympathetically, "to prepare you for the seriousness of Mr. Monteith's condition. He is undoubtedly in a bad way." This last remark was uncompromisingly true, though the two women could not see into Phelps's brain, and appreciate the subtle villainy that made him make this statement. It only added to Hazel's desire to go to the aid of the man to whom she indeed owed her life.

Phelps looked once more at Miss Lovelace. He seemed about to make a remark, but Jenny was too quick for him. She read the unspoken words that were on his lips. "Where Miss Harlow goes I go," she answered decisively. Phelps hid his deep-rooted chagrin with a polite little bow. After all, she was only a woman. What could she do to stem the torrent that was driving Hazel and Eric towards misery unspeakable?

The two girls put on their hats and prepared at once to follow the bringer of evil tidings.

"Let us go quickly," said Hazel, "every moment is precious." They hurried downstairs and out into the street. Here a conveyance was waiting. "I had the forethought to get a vehicle," said Phelps, "as it would take us three-quarters of an hour to walk there." He helped the two ladies inside the cab and got in himself.

He did not notice that against the kerb was lounging a somewhat seedy-looking individual, who looked fixedly at him; neither did he notice that when the carriage set off this same mysterious person followed after it, every now and then running so as to at least keep the vehicle in view.

But few words passed between the trio on their way to the inn. In due course the cab drew up outside the Jolly Waggoners and Phelps got out, assisting the two ladies to alight with conspicuous gallantry. At the door of the hostelry stood the rascally landlord, who had been well paid by Caldecott to back him up in his schemes, and who had no scruples in accepting a £50 note as the price of his acquiescence.

"How is the poor gentleman?" asked Phelps in a low voice, yet loud enough for his two fair companions to hear what he said.

The landlord shook his head ominously. "I am afraid it's a bad business," he muttered.

Everything dovetailed with such nice accuracy that neither Hazel nor her companion could find anything to allow their suspicions to be awakened; neither was this to be wondered at. They had to deal with scoundrels versed in all the arts of criminality, for Caldecott, although his position as a country gentleman and a man of wealth hid his real nature, was a *roué* of the worst order, a man moreover who consorted freely with criminals and black-legs in the numerous by-paths where such birds of ill-omen are to be found. All was quiet in the little inn; the bar was empty; it was too early as yet for the returning labourers to drop in and have their glass at the conclusion of their day's labour. The inn was too much off the main road to command the patronage of its more favoured and pretentious rivals.

The landlord threw open a door that had access to a flight of wooden stairs. "The gentleman is in the room at the end of those stairs, lady," he said in a low voice.

Hazel went first, now all impatience to see the man whom she pictured as lying wounded, perhaps dying, in the lonely chamber at the top of the staircase. After her came Jenny. Phelps brought up the rear. The latter had realised that the presence of Miss Lovelace might prove a serious obstruction to the success of Caldecott's scheme. While they had been driving towards the inn his brain had been actively employed in devising a way whereby Miss Lovelace might be prevented from becoming a thorn in Caldecott's side when the real state of affairs became known. He determined accordingly upon a particularly daring act of villainy.

When the three found themselves upon the staircase Phelps hastily closed the communicating door behind him, with the result that the whole staircase became enveloped in darkness; then with wonderful deftness he whipped a handkerchief from his pocket, over which he emptied some chloroform already prepared for his purpose.

To fling the handkerchief over Jenny's head from the back was the work of a moment; a faint gurgling cry, and the girl fell back unconscious into his arms. Hazel stumbling on in the darkness ahead turned round at the sound. "What's the matter?" she said. "It's all right, Miss Harlow," answered Phelps, "I knocked my hand against the wall. Open the door at the top and we shall be all right."

Absolutely unprepared for what awaited her Hazel did as she was bidden; she threw open the door and hurriedly entered the chamber.

The sight that met her eyes froze the blood within her veins, for there, standing in the centre of the room, confronting her with a diabolical expression on his face, stood Horace Caldecott.

She had no eyes for anything else; no eyes for the pallet in the corner, upon which, bound, gagged, and absolutely helpless, with white face and staring eyeballs, lay Eric Monteith; no eyes for the man who had entered the room behind her, with the unconscious body of Jenny in his arms; her every faculty was centred upon the face and figure of the hated Caldecott.

"So you have come, sweetheart," said Caldecott mockingly, "your tender soul couldn't bear to think that your lover was lying helpless and wounded in a country inn. Lover, did I say? Look at him. There he lies, like a trussed fowl. How is he going to help you now, think

Hazel Harlow will be in Belfast next week.

you? You should never have run away from Harlow Farm and the man who claims you now as a loving husband to be."

The tones of his low mocking voice fell on Hazel's ears like a whip. She quivered as though with physical pain. All her faculties seemed numbed and deadened. Her eyes, which seemed to have a vacant, almost meaningless look in them, went to where Eric lay straining with impotent fury at his bonds. Then they turned to the senseless body of Jenny Lovelace. It was like some horrid scene in an Adelphi drama—villain, hero and heroine had met in the culminating scene of the play.

"What do you want with me?" said Hazel. Her voice seemed far away. She could say nothing else, yet felt she must say something.

"That is soon told," said Caldecott. "I have been balked of you long enough. I tried fair means, they failed; then I swore to myself that if that didn't answer I'd have you by foul ones, and I think you will admit that this time I have not played my cards badly. You ask me what I want with you. Listen. I want you for my wife; either you promise to marry me here, ay, this very day, or"—his voice dropped to a hoarse whisper, "*I'll torture Eric Monteith before your very eyes!*" The price of your resistance shall be paid by your lover."

For a few seconds Hazel's brain refused to take in the real meaning of Caldecott's speech. It could not be true. She knew that the man before her was wicked and cruel, but he could not stoop to such villainy as that. The mediæval expedient to which he had alluded was surely impossible in the enlightened days of the twentieth century. In the small world in which Hazel had hitherto moved, such ideas had no real significance; they were only things to be read about, to be shuddered over, to be forgotten.

She looked helplessly at Caldecott. "Mr. Monteith is not my lover," she said in a low voice. "I have none, I want none. You must surely be jesting, you could not, nobody could be so terribly wicked as to torture an innocent man because a girl, who has no love for you, who wants only to live quietly and at peace with her fellows, has the misfortune to be unable to reciprocate the feeling that you call love."

Caldecott made a step forward. His dark eyes blazed with suppressed passion; he seemed for the moment to forget his position; to forget where he was, and that there were other persons in the room besides himself and Hazel. He remembered only that the woman for whom he was ready to sell his life, his soul, his honour, stood before him.

"What I call love," he muttered hoarsely. "This is no time for casuistries. I should have thought that by this time you would have realised that nothing in Heaven or Hell would keep me from possessing you." And then his voice grew almost tender. "Ah, Hazel," he said, "is it so much that I ask? I can give you wealth, a position, comfort for all your life. It is but one little word that you have to say. Think of all it means; on the one hand, wealth, happiness, Mr. Monteith's safety, your own immunity from any cares; on the other, you will still be mine at the cost of—" he broke off abruptly with a significant gesture towards the spot where Eric lay.

A thousand doubts and fears beset Hazel's brain. Was ever girl in a more awful position than she was at that moment? She looked wildly round her as though seek-

ing for some means of escape from the horrible fate that hemmed her in so remorselessly. In her trouble she hardly seemed to realise that Jenny, her own dear friend, lay still and motionless in a corner of the room, beside her the man Phelps, who had been the ready tool in his employers hands.

"I cannot marry you," she moaned. "It would be a sin to give my hand to you without my heart, and how can I love you after all that has passed between us?" She broke off abruptly, and covered her face with her hands.

An exclamation of baffled rage fell from Caldecott's lips. "I will give you three minutes, Hazel," he said, "to make your choice. If at the end of that time you still refuse to accede to my request, I shall have to put into execution what I have already hinted at. A mediæval form of coercion perhaps, but one that even to-day is drastic and efficacious, and if you should entertain any idea of using your fair lungs let me remind you that we are in a lonely inn, the landlord of which is friendly to my interests."

He took out his watch with the air of a man who had fully made up his mind. "Three minutes, and then you know what awaits Mr. Monteith if you are still obdurate."

Hazel flung herself down on her knees before her tormentor. "If you have any spark of manhood left in you," she cried piteously, "if you have a heart, as other men have, you cannot be serious in proposing this awful crime. You must know that I cannot see an innocent and noble man suffer slow agonies before my eyes if I can do anything to save him. If there is no other alternative I will become your wife, but I tell you so surely as there is a Heaven above, I will take my own life rather than become the partner of a man who can stoop to such low depths."

And if the situation was terrible for Hazel it can be well imagined how frightful it was for the hapless Eric.

A witness of all that transpired, of the terrible fate that menaced the woman he loved with a pure and tender devotion, he lay straining at his bonds in impotent agony and rage, powerless to move hand or foot to save Hazel from her fate.

"Two and a half minutes," said Caldecott in a terrible voice as though he had not heard one word of Hazel's impassioned appeal, "you have half a minute in which to decide."

All the colour faded out of Hazel's face. She looked agonizingly around, her eyes fell on Eric's ghastly face, beaded with the sweat of agony. "For your sake," she murmured brokenly, her eyes upon Monteith. Then in a low, almost inaudible voice, she whispered, "I consent and may Heaven forgive you."

CHAPTER IV.

It will be remembered that when the self-styled "Mr. Geoffrey Phelps" piloted Hazel and Jenny Lovelace to the vehicle in readiness to bear them to the Jolly Waggoners, a seedy-looking individual had started off in pursuit of the cab. He kept the conveyance in sight through the streets of Rugby, but when it left the town he found that he was unable to do more than keep it in sight along the country road. At last, thoroughly blown, he came to a halt and stopped for a few moments to wipe the perspiration from his face and to recover somewhat his spent breath.

Tell your friends about Hazel Harlow.

"Phew," he ejaculated, "you're out of training, Kempton Bond, the pace has been too hot for you." He drew a photograph from his pocket, the portrait of a clean-shaven man with dark, crisp hair and well-cut features. "It's the same," he muttered, "in spite of a moustache and hair dyed. Now I wonder what on earth his game is, driving off in a cab with two young ladies, one of them Miss Hazel Harlow, the beautiful star of the *Good Samaritan Company*. I tracked him to Rugby all right, though I don't think he knew I was on his track. He's a smart man, but like a good many smart men, he's a bit foolhardy. If he'd laid low in London the chances are he wouldn't have run his head into the noose. But hold on, I haven't got him yet, and he's such a slippery customer, there's no knowing what may happen."

He put the photograph back into his pocket and set off at a brisk walk along the road. He had not gone more than half a mile when he suddenly saw the carriage coming back. In a moment he was all alertness. When the vehicle came up with him he saw that it was empty. Taking a purse from his pocket he held it aloft and cried out to the driver: "Hi, there! what have you done with your fare? He dropped his purse on the pavement in Rugby, and I've been sprinting after that thoroughbred of yours to try and catch up with him."

The man on the box-seat grinned. "Let's go halves," he said.

Mr. Kempton Bond shook his head. "No," he answered, "but he's sure to give me five bob or so for taking it back, and I'll give you half a crown on spec."

"Right you are," said the other. "You'll probably find him and his lady friends at the Jolly Waggoners, about three-quarters of a mile on down the second turning to the left. I reckon they're actresses, those two. I expect there's another 'mash' of theirs waiting for them at the public. That'll make a nice little party of four, and one of the girls is a perfect stunner." This with a suggestive wink.

Bond laughed and threw up the half-crown as promised. The man bit it and then transferred it to his pocket. "Good luck, mate," he said, and drove on.

"That was a half crown well spent," said the mysterious Mr. Bond to himself as he struck out with renewed briskness along the lonely road. Then he felt in his pockets. "Shooting iron and dardies all handy. I shall have to spring a mine on him before he tumbles to what's up. It would be a feather in my cap if I could nab him. Wouldn't they look blue at the Yard?" And he chuckled softly to himself in anticipation of the coming triumph.

As he drew opposite the Jolly Waggoners he was at once struck by the remarkable absence of life there seemed round the inn. The house had the appearance of being shut up. It was a two-storied building and the blinds of the upper windows were drawn down. The front door, instead of yawning hospitably open as is usually the case with country inns on a fine summer evening, was closed. All this Kempton Bond's quick eyes took in in a moment. He went to the door and tried the handle. The door was locked. He determined on a bold course of action. He went round to the back of the house through the little garden to the back door. This, as he had half expected would be the case, was still open. From the room above came the suppressed sound of voices. He could hear it was a woman speaking, and from the low tones in which she spoke, he could tell that

she was addressing someone as a suppliant, but could not hear what she said.

He boldly entered the house, and found himself in a low stone flagged passage, with doors right and left, and the bar visible straight ahead. With quiet tread he made direct for the latter place. The next instant he was on the landlord's side of the bar counter, and confronting a man placidly snoring in a chair behind the bar. It was the landlord of the Jolly Waggoners.

Bond smote him on the shoulder. "Hey, man," he said, "it isn't Sunday, wake up! I'm dying for a drink. What do you mean by locking your front door? Have you made so much money that you don't care whether customers come or not?"

The landlord had leapt to his feet; there was fear upon his face, that and something more. Bond's eagle eyes read this at a glance.

"Who are you?" muttered the fellow hoarsely. "How do you come here? What do you want?"

Bond laughed in his face. "Upon my sam," he said, "you're the rummiest sort of drink-purveyor I've come across for a long time! Is it the custom for inn-keepers in this part of the world to shut up shop before it begins to get dark, and then when a man comes in to have a drink to ask him what he wants?" Then his voice changed. "Look here," he said sternly, "It strikes me you've got some ugly game ahead. There's something jolly suspicious about all this. I'm not a man to be fooled with. What's your game?"

The landlord went white to his lips. If ever terror was painted upon a man's countenance it was upon his. Bond's eyes never left his face.

"I'll give you drink," muttered the fellow, "anything you like, and you needn't trouble about settling for it. The fact is I was feeling a bit queer to-day. I'm alone in the house, the missus has gone to Rugby, and really I have such a small business that I thought I'd shut up shop and have forty winks."

The man was lying, and Bond knew it.

"Oh, that's it," he said in a low voice, "then perhaps you will kindly explain to me what you have done with your two gentlemen and their lady actress friends."

The man was struck speechless. He tried to find words to falter out some pitiable excuse, but, like many other rascals, he was an abject coward at heart. He dimly realised that this strange, shabbily dressed individual was not what he represented himself to be. Suddenly Kempton Bond's hand went to his breast-pocket; the next moment the inn-keeper found himself gazing down the ugly looking barrel of a handy little Smith and Weeson. In a moment he dropped on his knees.

"Now see here," said Bond, "you tell me the truth or I'll blow your brains out. Who have you got in the house? What villainy's afoot? If you can serve desperate men serve me now—the truth, mind you, for you're nearer eternity at this moment than you ever have been or ever will be in all your miserable existence."

Bond threw all the intensity of scorn into his voice of which he was capable. He knew the man before him, knew exactly how to deal with such as he. His words produced the desired effect. The inn-keeper was clay in his hands, clay to be moulded into whatsoever shape Bond might desire.

"I'll tell you," muttered the miserable man, "if only you will spare my life. There are five of them upstairs, three men and two women. One of the men is bound;

Hazel Harlow will travel from town to town.

the other two have got some game on which I don't know."

The fellow was not lying now, Bond could see that. Into what hornets' nest had he dropped? What villainy was being enacted in the room above him? Then the sound of the pleading voice came back to him.

"Where are they?" he said to the landlord. With a trembling finger the miserable wretch pointed to the door behind where he was sitting, that led to the upper chamber. "They're up there," he muttered hoarsely.

Bond stole across and opened the door noiselessly. The sound of a woman's voice came down the dark staircase.

"I consent, and may Heaven forgive you," were the words he heard, but never in all his life had he heard a voice in which was bound up such a world of concentrated agony.

He looked swiftly round; it was well he did so; behind him with a long butcher's knife in his hand the villainous landlord was creeping stealthily towards him. Like lightning Kempton Bond seized a pewter mug that stood on the zinc counter at his side and dashed it full into the cowardly scoundrel's face.

With a low cry the man fell over senseless, a thin line of red on his forehead marking where the unusual weapon had found its billet.

"That's settled him for the time," muttered Bond. The next instant he had bounded up the dark staircase and flung open the door of the room above. The sight that met his gaze transcended everything that he had expected.

In one corner was Eric helpless, in the centre of the room stood Caldecott with Hazel fainting at his feet, at the other side stood Geoffrey Phelps beside the motionless form of Jenny Lovelace.

Kempton Bond's six-shooter was levelled straight at Phelps' head. "Henry Lester," he thundered, "I arrest you in the King's name. Throw up your hands!"

With a low snarl like that of a wild beast, Phelps flung himself forward.

Kempton Bond's revolver rang out. Phelps fell heavily, but it was not the bullet that had caused his fall. Jenny Lovelace, who had been lying apparently unconscious, had in reality for some considerable time partially shaken off the effects of the anæsthetic administered to her. As Kempton Bond entered the room, and as the man Phelps or Lester, or whatever his name might be, flung himself forward, her right hand shot out and grasped his ankle.

The tug at his foot threw him to the ground, his head caught the boards with a dull thud. Like lightning Kempton Bond fell upon him and had slipped a pair of shining handcuffs over his wrists.

In the meanwhile Caldecott, realising dimly that even now at the very moment of victory defeat stared him in the face, stooped down and swung Hazel off her feet. Bond had left the door open. If he could once get out upon the stairs with his burden he felt that he could lock the door and perhaps make good his escape. But Bond was too quick for him.

"No, you don't," he muttered, and turning from the unconscious Phelps, who had been stunned by his heavy contact with the floor, he gripped Caldecott by the waist.

Caldecott loosened his hold on Hazel with a fierce oath. There was a revolver in his pocket, but he had no time to use it. His right hand swung out and he caught Bond full on the point of the chin. He was a powerful man, and the blow was a telling one. Bond staggered back

and fell to the floor. In the midst of all this indescribable confusion Jenny had managed to get to her feet.

Like a bird she skimmed across the room to where Eric lay, and with a pocket-knife had begun hacking at the bonds that confined him to the bed. Another instant and he was free, just as Caldecott lusting for vengeance, had turned to wreak his baffled rage against his defenceless enemy.

Seeing, however, that Monteith was free, and noticing a look upon Eric's face so terrible in its expression of righteous anger, he shrank back. He was no coward, despite his villain's heart, and yet he dared not face the awful resentment that blazed from Eric's eyes. He cast one look round the apartment. Bond was slowly struggling to his feet, his confederate lay helpless, the next moment Eric would have been at his throat.

He leapt for the door and dashed down the wooden staircase with indescribable speed. Slamming the door at the bottom of the stairs, he shot back the bolt on the other side.

Without pausing to notice the landlord who lay unconscious beneath his bar, he sped out of the back door and away.

CHAPTER V.

How they got through their performance at the theatre that night Hazel, Jenny, and Eric never knew. Indeed, in the middle of the second act Hazel, absolutely overwrought by the terrible events of a few hours ago, broke down completely. For a moment a vast hush fell on the whole audience, absolutely at a loss to understand the meaning of such a *contretemps*. At once Raymond Venables ordered the curtain to be rung down. The manager had always a great eye for effect. He went round to the front of the curtain and in a grave, impressive voice, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you will all sympathise with Miss Harlow when I tell you that she is acting to-night notwithstanding the fact that she has recently passed through a great domestic sorrow. In a few minutes I hope with your kind indulgence, Miss Harlow will be fit again to resume her part. Miss Harlow begs me to ask for your indulgence."

In a moment a mighty cheer rent the auditorium, and when the curtain went up again it was some few minutes before the storm of cheering subsided. The rest of the play was gone through without a perceptible hitch.

After the performance Kempton Bond, at Eric's invitation, came round to the latter's rooms to supper. Bond had promised to relate to Eric the history of how he had happened to come to the rescue so opportunely.

"I am a detective," began Kempton Bond. "You will perhaps remember that a year ago a daring bank robbery was perpetrated in London which resulted in the thieves or thief getting clear away without leaving any definite clue behind them. Scotland Yard was baffled, and I took up the job. A great many times the scent grew hot, but I was never able to put my finger exactly on the right spot. At last, however, by a long series of circumstances that it would be needless to relate, I managed to bring the crime home to one man, the man Lester, *alias* Phelps, *alias* a hundred names, one of the most daring and successful criminals that the annals of crime have disclosed. What his connection exactly with this man Caldecott was I cannot tell you. My own theory is that Squire Horace Caldecott, landowner and wealthy man as he is, has a knowledge of the seamy side of life that even

Hazel Harlow is in Rugby this week.

Charles Peace would have envied. But he's a deep customer, you won't find any records against him at Scotland Yard, and besides, he has money that was left him by a wealthy father, so that he has no need to break into banks or commit such felonies. But I should be greatly honoured if you would tell me, Mr. Monteith, the history of Miss Harlow as connected with this man Caldecott. Who knows, I may be able to do you a good turn some day? I've got Lester, but the other's given us the slip."

Eric readily complied with the detective's desire. He told him all; how that Caldecott had set his soul upon becoming possessed of Hazel Harlow; how he had sworn that he would let nothing stand in his path that might keep him from the consummation of his purpose.

Kempton Bond heard him out in silence. When he had finished the detective looked somewhat grave.

"There's always a woman in the case," he said sententiously, "and I'm afraid there's still trouble ahead for Miss Harlow. Her purity and beauty are the two great factors that must always militate against her, especially as she has entered the thorny path of stage life. Can you not persuade her to leave a profession that has so many snares and dangers for such as she?"

Eric sighed. "That is just what I cannot do," he said moodily. "I will not disguise from you the fact that I would make Miss Harlow my wife to-morrow if she would let me, but—" he stopped abruptly, as though his heart was too full for words.

The detective looked at him shrewdly. "You have my sympathy, Mr. Monteith," he said feelingly. "My advice to you is what may perhaps seem trite and commonplace, but I think it is nevertheless sound, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'"

As can be well imagined, the terrible experience they had gone through had left its traces upon both Hazel and Jenny. At breakfast the next morning they could talk about nothing but the adventure of the day before. They were half way through breakfast when the landlady entered with a letter that bore the Rugby postmark, and had evidently been posted the night before. One glance at the writing and Hazel uttered a low cry.

"Oh, Jenny," she said, "it's from him. I daren't see what is inside: there must be no secrets between us now; open it and tell me what's there."

Jenny opened the letter with a feeling almost of fear. She read it through carefully.

"Shall I read it to you, Hazel?" she asked.

Hazel nodded.

There was no date, no heading.

"If you think," the letter began, "that I am the sort of man who can bear without any pang seeing that which I have sworn to possess continually being snatched from my grasp, you little know the sort of man you have to deal with. I have sworn that, even if I have to sacrifice every penny that I possess, if I must sell my soul for the attainment of my object, I will do so rather than lose you. As for the man who has constituted himself your protector—though other folks might give him another name—this letter will serve for him as well as for you. Tell him that I will be even with him yet, and there are more ways than one of procuring that revenge which shall assuredly be mine. I have money. I have power, and I have cause for vengeance. Tell him this, that he shall never know when the blow shall fall; he shall never be safe sleeping or waking, by day or by night.

He shall feel what it is to have thwarted the desires of a desperate man."

Here the letter ended without a signature. The two girls stared mutely in one another's faces.

"What will you do, Hazel?" asked Jenny.

"Do?" cried Hazel, her face aglow with new resolve, "do, I shall give the letter to Mr. Monteith, and take no more notice of it. What can Horace Caldecott do? We are not in the Dark Ages. Can he employ hired assassins to dog Mr. Monteith's footsteps? That letter is the letter of a bully and a coward."

Yet although she spoke bravely, Hazel knew full well that in Caldecott both she and Eric had a terrible and implacable foe. The man was delirious with passion, he had become a monomaniac where Hazel was concerned. They could only keep watch and be ever on their guard against this snake in the grass, who always struck at them with poisoned fangs when least they expected it.

SYNOPSIS No. 7.

The next place on the tour list of the "Good Samaritan" Company was Belfast, the inauguration of a fortnight's stay in the Emerald Isle. The adventure that was to befall Hazel Harlow there was one to which was added the terrors of the sea. It was one that nearly cost the beautiful actress her life. Readers of "Short Stories" should certainly not fail to follow Miss Harlow on her journey.

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Hazel Harlow will be in Belfast next week.



His Fair Unknown.

THE STORY OF A SEASIDE ADVENTURE AND ITS ROMANTIC SEQUEL.

CHAPTER I.

ONE DAY AT DIRRIECOMB.

"If you get out as far as Gull Island, sir, you'll mind that a pretty strong current sets to the nor'ard of it. We've had more than two or three accidents with folks getting carried away."

Allan Curtis laughed as he stepped into the broad, shallow pair-oar, so different from the smart, slender craft to be seen on inland waters.

"Thanks for the tip," he said, sitting down on the central thwart and picking up the gaily-painted sculls; "but I have known Dirriecomb Bay from boyhood. Push her bow well round for me, will you, there's quite a swell on this morning."

The grizzled, elderly boatman at the hiring-station obeyed and thrust the prow of the dinghy off the massive concrete stair that descended to the beach from the fine esplanade which occupied the greater part of the Dirriecomb sea-front. The full, strong waves of the high tide were dashing against it with considerable force.

For the rest, Dirriecomb Bay was bright and peaceful. The scorching rays of a summer sun beat upon its expanse of blue, flecked with gusts of snowy foam, upon the staring stucco hotels and the long promenade of the new town; upon the red brick and mossy tiles of the old town—nestling in a hollow of the uneven coast—upon the grey shingle, the merry children, the lounging holiday-makers, the rank of bathing machines, the little harbour with its plantation of masts, and the half-submerged islet in the middle of the bay.

Allan Curtis, rowing lazily towards this last, drew breath after breath of air as stimulating as champagne, and contemplated, with a regretful pleasure, the animated picture before him.

A few more hours and he would be in a very different place. London, whose smoke, whose dust and roar, whose sweltering pavements, he dreaded to think of, would claim him—he would go back to the huge hospital, to its grim, bare wards, its operating-room, its arduous duties, its tragedies of life and death. The young house surgeon, broken down by overwork in a torrid June, had rapidly regained his health beside the invigorating sea,

and now, his vacation ended, he must return to relieve his substitute, to take up once again the practice of his profession.

Truth to tell, that profession—for all Allan Curtis loved it ardently—proved sometimes just a trifle unsatisfactory to the youthful medico's romantic heart. Good looking, athletic, a general favourite, of growing reputation, he was as fancy free as a girl in her teens. Yet even a heart that is fancy-free may occasionally remind its owner of its existence, and, at the present moment, something—whether it was his approaching departure, the beauty of the scene about him, or the intoxicating freshness of the sea-breeze, gave the brilliant young house surgeon of St. Luke's an unmistakable twinge of melancholy. He felt—though he would have been puzzled to say why—both lonely and sentimental.

As his active muscles propelled the small craft nearer and nearer to the low reef in the centre of the bay—where the gulls hovered shriekingly over the banks of weed—he noticed, between him and the islet, a blot of bright yellow upon the surface of the water, rising and falling with the waves.

A keener scrutiny proved it to be a smart bathing-cap frilled and tucked like a dainty Tam o' Shanter; beneath it was a pretty flushed countenance. He could perceive that the swimmer, no mean one, as was testified by her distance from the beach—was striking out desperately in the direction of the coast. Yet her progress was rather sea than shorewards.

Hastily Allan Curtis took his bearings, to discover that he had shot across the powerful current which set past the island. It lay astern of him, and the swimmer was in it, finding it too strong for her, and drifting momentarily further from the beach.

Slewing the pair-oar with a vicious manipulation of the sculls, the young surgeon rowed in pursuit. The yellow cap was slipping out to sea by slow instalments which told how bravely its wearer was fighting.

Curtis snatched the dinghy over the low rollers as if it had been a racing skiff; another moment and it ran in on the swimmer's lee, shielding her from the shimmering ocean which had seemed to be her goal. The oarsman marked admiringly the determined courage of the

resolute features and the graceful swing of the white arms beneath the lapping water.

Allan Curtis put the handle of a scull under his knee and raised his straw hat. "You are in an awkward current," he said cheerfully, "hadn't I better tow you free of it? Or would you prefer a lift home?"

The closely-compressed lips of the swimmer parted and her dark eyes smiled pathetically. "Thank you," she gasped, laying a soft palm on the gunwale of the boat, "I—I fancy I was beginning to get a bit frightened. But I could swim back all right if only I could get out of the current."

Her rescuer looked over his shoulder—there was an ample length of cord fastened to the painter-ring in the bow. He reached for it, and tossed an end overboard. The girl caught at it and he began to pull steadily athwart the bay, his attendant water-nymph swimming on her side with slow, yet expert strokes that carried her along at a considerable speed, and left her but little dependent on the assistance of Curtis's sculls, as soon as the dinghy cleared the rapid seaward current.

While he rowed Allan Curtis had time to study the piquant person that was so gallantly breasting the waves of Dirriecomb Bay. Her face, dipped with the salt spray of the chopping sea, there were patches of throbbing colour on either cheek and a mischievous light in the brown orbs. Not for five years had the young surgeon made so exhaustive an inspection of a woman's face. His sculls beat mechanically, and he stared at the fair

features of the swimmer in an entire forgetfulness of himself and his whereabouts.

The girl herself aroused him from his ecstatic contemplation by flinging the rope in once more. "Thank you very much," she said, "I feel as if I had awakened from some horrible nightmare. And yet I'm positive I should have been too proud to cry out if you hadn't offered to help me. I'll swim back to my machine now. Good-morning, and please believe that I am very grateful."

"I—I trust we shall meet again," stammered Curtis, "under more—more conventional circumstances."

"I'm afraid," retorted the unknown, "that it isn't very likely. Thank you all the same." And while her preserver hesitated for an answer, she darted shorewards.

Allan Curtis watched the yellow cap thoughtfully as it approached the beach. It disappeared abruptly—the wearer had dived. Scan the shallows as he might, after that he could not see the distinctive head-dress. She must have whipped it off before coming up, so that he should not track her. Curtis heaved a profound sigh and muttered certain syllables that sounded suspiciously like strong language.

Ultimately he sculled to the landing stairs, paid for his boat, lit a cigar, and walked down the esplanade to the beach, where he devoted himself to observing feminine faces, as many an elegant figure, fresh from her morning dip, passed him, unconscious of his scrutiny. But the memorable countenance of his ocean-nymph did not



He stared at the fair features of the swimmer in an entire forgetfulness of himself and his whereabouts.

Hazel Harlow will travel from town to town.

dawn upon his vision, Allan Curtis fumed in an irritable discontent.

Having thus whiled away an hour, he strolled over to his hotel, which happened to command the shore-end of the esplanade, and ordered lunch on the terrace. He consumed the meal absent-mindedly, keeping his eyes fixed on the moving throng beneath. But no glimpse of the fair unknown rewarded him for his pertinacity.

He was sipping his coffee, with moody deliberation, when he saw that the loungers about the sunlit promenade had gathered into a circular crowd near the inland extremity of the pier. At the centre of the circle, upon portable folding-stools, sat three personages draped mysteriously in lengthy red garments, resembling a domino, and masked with short vizards of red satin.

Two of these were men, the third a woman, the latter tall and of singularly elegant carriage. One of the men was a harpist, the other bore a violin; the woman poised by its long bright ribbon a mandoline, decorated with the parti-coloured streamers inseparable from that instrument. Something about the mandolinist, cloaked and masked as she was, struck Allan Curtis as familiar.

He listened to a portion of their concert, popular fragments of melody, vocal and instrumental, floating up to his terrace lunch-table, and then, inexplicably interested by his review of the mandoline player, rose to pay his bill and descend.

"What's the meaning of that masquerade?" he asked the waiter, indicating the crowd at the pier-foot with a gesture of his wrist and cigar.

The waiter shrugged his shoulders as he counted out the change of a half-sovereign. "The 'Red Musicians,' sir," he said, "they're all the rage in Dirriecomb. But if you do go in the ring, sir, have a care of your watch and purse. There's been any number of complaints about pocket-picking on the beach and esplanade while the Red Musicians are playing."

Allan Curtis left a shilling on the salver, put a match to another "Henry Clay"—he had choice tastes in tobacco—stalked down to the shingle, and, having buttoned his coat over his pockets, elbowed his way into the front rank of the circle.

The mandolinist had commenced to sing, accompanied by the harp and the violin. Her voice was a sweet contralto, not too penetrating but well-managed. She was singing a favourite air out of a recent light opera, most of her audience—Curtis among them—knew the words.

A hush had seized on the crowd—a hush in which the tremor of the tide on the shingle could be distinctly heard, as a sort of background to the sad poetry of the song.

Love is a butterfly in the sun, hearts are the flowers that, one by one,

Yield him their honey and whisper "Stay!"
But he flies away, he flies away.

Love is a star that falls to the earth, love is a sob that began in mirth—

A golden glow in a sky of grey
That fades away, that fades away.

Love is a little wind from the west, hearts are the leaves by his breath caressed,

But he sighs far well at the end of the day
And steals away, and steals away.

Curtis started. The curves of the singer's mouth and chin below the crimson silk vizard, the movement of the delicate lips as they shaped the words, marked the face as that of the woman he had rescued that morning

in the bay. He told himself that he could see too small a portion of the masked countenance, that the effect of the picturesque bathing-cap and the nun-like hood were so different that a comparison between the wearers was impossible. Yet, in spite of his caution, he was sure of the singer's identity.

Slipping round the ring, he contrived to get nearer. She had finished her song and returned to her mandoline to play a duet with the harpist. The violinist laid his instrument upon his camp-stool, produced a green cloth bag, and went to collect the donations of the audience.

In due course he came to Allan Curtis. The young surgeon, as a result of his interest in the masked lady regarded her colleague critically. The features behind the violinist's vizard were obviously not those of a gentleman: they were vulgar, impudent, and bloated as if by drinking.

Curtis dropped a sixpence into the receptacle, noting, as he did so, a broad white scar on the back of the fellow's right hand. Then his eyes strayed back again to the masked and hooded head that he would have given so much to see without its provoking guards. It was bent over the chords of the mandoline, her fingers drawing a passionate waltz tune from the vibrating strings. But once he thought it was lifted and that a glance was shot in his direction. Yet he could not be certain that her gaze had actually rested upon him.

Suddenly there was a scuffle not far from where he stood, and the crowd, swaying violently, almost swept him off his feet. When he regained his balance it was to behold the violinist struggling in the grasp of a burly policeman. Astonished, he looked for the mandoline player. She was nowhere to be seen, but the harpist was surrendering, to a second constable, both himself and his instrument.

Allan Curtis, amazed by this novel development, was pushing towards the actual point of the commotion, when he felt a touch on his arm and spun about, to discover before him, in a neat black gown and flat toque the heroine of his adventure in the bay. She was flushed and excited and obviously striving to render her disturbed breathing even and regular.

"Forgive me," she murmured, "but you have done me one great service to-day, may I make that my excuse for asking another. If—if I am accosted by—by any body during the next few minutes will you—will you say you know me, and that my name is Watson, Miss Hilda Watson, of 15 Frobisher Place, Kensington, London? That is my real name and address; it is, indeed."

The dark orbs that peeped into his own were so pitiful the face in which they were framed so lovely, that Curtis, despite the promptings of his practical common-sense, could only bow. Miss Watson's request and his assent had been only just in time, a police-sergeant, who was moving about among the excited crowd, singled out the young surgeon and his companion. Curtis saw that the officer carried in his hand a mandoline and, slung over his wrist, a red domino that trailed upon the shingle as he walked.

"Beg pardon, sir," he remarked, halting by them, "but is this lady with you?"

Curtis was driven to action; he had made an imprudent promise and he must perform it. "Yes," he said coldly, "what is the trouble?"

The sergeant was taking a quiet survey of Miss Hilda Watson. "A gang of thieves," was his reply, "has been working in with that troupe of players there. The one

as had the violin was Charlie Weldon, known as Clever Charlie, and he's marked on the hand with a scar that he received from his own knife in a fight with a 'tec.' he was trying to skewer; his speciality is musical fraud. We've got him and the other man, as well as their pick-pocket accomplices in the mob. But we're after the girl that played the mandoline—she dropped her instrument and toggery and got off. But we have her description, and we'll nab her yet."

"Perhaps," rejoined Curtis, "as Miss Watson and I appear to have excited your suspicions, you will take my name and address. I am Allan Curtis, house-surgeon at St. Luke's Hospital, London. This lady resides at No. 15 Frohisher Place, Kensington, also London."

The police officer weakened under this show of dignity. "Oh, not at all, sir," he faltered, "sorry to have inconvenienced you. But we are wanting a good-looking female with dark hair and brown eyes, and I noticed this lady standing, as I thought, alone. I apologise to you, sir, and to Miss—Miss Watson, for my error."

He saluted nervously, and went back to his subordinates, still solemnly carrying the mandoline and the domino. The girl at Allan Curtis' side glanced after him, with an irrepressible smile upon her lips.

The young surgeon stepped away from the crowd and directed his course to the open beach, Miss Watson's hand laid demurely on his arm. Further along the shore he felt that his companion had relinquished her hold.

"How can I thank you, Mr. Curtis?" she said, and her voice lingered upon her first utterance of his name.

"Do not try," advised Allan Curtis, with forced calmness, for he was fretting under the shock of the discovery that his fair unknown of the bay was the associate of criminals, possibly a criminal herself. "I had no option but to protect you, since you threw yourself on my mercy. I hoped, as I told you this morning, to meet you once more. But I did not, I confess, expect to have to deliver you from the clutches of the Law, as I did from those of the Gull Island current."

The other tossed her handsome head, though her black eyes were suspiciously moist.

"You are not complimentary, Mr. Curtis," she responded; "it would have been chivalrous to ask me for an explanation before condemning me unheard. But now, I shall admit nothing and explain nothing."

Curtis stared moodily at the expanse of dancing water. He was humiliated by the thought that he had been dreaming dreams over his solitary lunch, dreams in which the fascinating creature before him had played the most romantic of parts.

"Probably it is as well," he said drily; "however, do you feel sure that you will be safe from—from the further attentions of the—police. You should leave Dirriecomb as soon as you can contrive. Otherwise inquiries may be made into my right to vouch for your respectability."

He trifled nervously with his watch-chain. "I'm a bad hand at preaching," he murmured; "but I wouldn't go on as you've started, I wouldn't, honestly—it's a road that leads to misery and despair. I pulled you out of the current, don't make me wish—for your own sake—I'd left you there."

The girl moved away, smothering a sob. "You mean well," she glanced back to say, brokenly, "but you don't understand. Good-bye, and thank you again."

Curtis stepped after her, taking his sovereign-purse from his vest-pocket. "You can't communicate with—

with your associates," he said; "they are in custody—have you the means to get free of Dirriecomb?"

Miss Hilda Watson flushed to her ears, and shrank from him. "Don't, don't!" she cried; "you're mistaken, truly. Oh, I must go—I can't endure it any longer."

And turning her back upon him, she hurried up the shingle, crossed the promenade, and vanished among the strolling holiday-makers. Allan Curtis had recourse to a fresh cigar, and a saunter by the edge of the tide.

An hour later he flung the stump of his third "Henry Clay" into the wavelets, went to his hotel, packed his bag, and caught the next train to town. Dirriecomb had suddenly become unbearable.

When he unpacked the said bag in his room at the hospital that night his brain was still running on Miss Hilda Watson.

"Poor little woman!" he muttered, "I wonder what will happen to her in the end. She was as pretty as a picture and swam like a mermaid. Ugh, fancy a mermaid wanted by the police!"

With which grim reflection he dismissed the lady in question from his mind.

CHAPTER II.

A WALK DOWN BOND STREET.

"A CUP of coffee, please, and a biscuit."

Allan Curtis sat down rather wearily in a corner of the smart West-end tea-rooms. He had hurried from St. Luke's to Bond Street for a talk with a famous surgical instrument maker about a new thing in metal splints that the latter was perfecting for him, and this, with a couple of accidents earlier in the day, had effectively deprived him of his lunch. A glance at his watch had decided the young surgeon that he had time to snatch a little refreshment before hastening back to the hospital.

It was late in a dull September afternoon, two months since he had returned from Dirriecomb and his vacation. But it was not of Dirriecomb that Curtis was thinking as he sipped his coffee, his mind was absorbed by the problem of reducing in weight his otherwise satisfactory splint.

Suddenly there fell upon his ears the vibrating notes of a mandoline, playing to a piano and violoncello obligato, a lingering air. The melody seemed to speak the familiar words:

Love is a little wind from the west, hearts are the leaves by
his breath caressed,
But he sighs farewell at the end of the day
And he steals away, he steals away.

Curtis spun round mechanically, at the extremity of the long room, but not ten feet from him was a trio of picturesque persons, clad in loose tea-gowns of amber "Liberty" silk and with artificial chrysanthemums of the same hue in their hair. Bent over the beribboned instrument, whose sound had arrested his reflections, he beheld a lovely face—the face of his singular acquaintance of Dirriecomb Bay.

His eyes rested upon her inquiringly; she was absorbed in her playing, and did not notice him. Her expression, he fancied, was graver, her features thinner, but still strikingly beautiful. As he contemplated them, Allan Curtis realised that he had never really forgotten her, that his last few hours at Dirriecomb had provided the most enduring of his life. Every motion of her graceful figure, every inflection of her clear, characteristic voice,



Hilda Watson threw off the hand he had laid on her wrist

had come back to him, in many a momentary reverie, in many a haunting dream.

Yet he had imagined her swept away by the currents of folly and crime, and here she was engaged in the pursuit of an honest calling. He recollected the confused sentences of appeal that had burst from him that day on Dirricomb beach—was it possible that she had heeded them? that she had struggled back to an honourable existence? The idea moved him deeply.

He was gazing so earnestly at her that the musician wakened to the fact. She glanced up and saw him. A flood of burning colour mounted to the wandering curls on her forehead, and, stooping over the mandoline again, she devoted herself to her music.

Soon there came the crashing chords of the finale and the piece ended. As it did so there was a peal from an ornamental clock on the wall and the hour struck—it was six. The players rose and disappeared into the rear of the establishment.

Curtis looked after them thoughtfully, then he perceived that a programme stood on the table, and inspected it. "Music three to six," it intimated. The young surgeon picked up his check and strolled down the room, to pay it at the desk cash. Another customer

was settling a similar account—a short man, with a vulgar and dissolute, yet obviously shrewd visage.

Allan Curtis studied him, hardly conscious that the other had so riveted his attention. Just then his neighbour gathered some silver off the rubber pad before him, and Curtis saw his hand. It was disfigured by a grey wheal or scar. In a flash the identity of the man broke upon him—he was the violinist who, masked and cloaked, had been arrested on Dirricomb beach the preceding July.

While Curtis's brain grappled with the riddle of his presence there the fellow passed out. The young surgeon discharged his own trifling debt and followed. The ex-violinist had disappeared. Shrugging his shoulders over the enigma thus complicated, Curtis halted a pace or two from the entrance of the tea-rooms. He had only to chafe a moment before his expectations were crowned with fulfilment. Miss Hilda Watson stepped out into Bond Street bearing her mandoline-case and buttoning a plain black glove.

In her quiet, even severe costume, she declared herself undoubtedly a lady. Curtis bowed as she went by him and raised his hat. For an instant she faltered, then paused. A second more and Curtis had gained her side.

Tell your friends about Hazel Harlow.

"Good afternoon," he said; "so we meet again. Let me confess that I—I waited for you."

The mandolinist blushed and her brown eyes evaded his. Allan Curtis was infected with her embarrassment.

"I—I wanted to ask how the world has been treating you," he added. "You have often been in my thoughts—more often, perhaps, than I comprehended till I saw you just now. You were going down Bond Street when I stopped you, and I am bound for St. Luke's Hospital—I think you heard at Dirricomb that I am house surgeon there—so our way lies in the same direction. May I—may I carry your case?"

Hilda Watson relinquished it, half unwillingly, and they walked on together. So far the mandoline player had not spoken. The first of the autumn evening was descending upon the West-end. As they passed the occasional openings of adjacent thoroughfares they could see that the sky was ablaze with a gorgeous sunset.

"When you left me that day on Dirricomb beach," pursued Curtis, "you seemed hurt because I had offered you some slight pecuniary assistance. I am sorry you regarded the proposal as an insult; I honestly desired to serve you. However, I should like to apologise, if I may, for my clumsiness."

The mandolinist turned to him with an impulsive gesture. "Please don't dream of it!" she cried; "I was ungrateful—I know I was. And you—you were twice as kind to me as I deserved."

"Nonsense!" answered Curtis. "Any man would have done as much. And also he would have made sure that you had got safely out of the mess you were in. That is what I blamed myself for after. But I'm awfully glad you're running straight, I am indeed."

Miss Watson winced and bit her lip. They had reached the bottom of Bond Street, and were hesitating, instinctively, before crossing. Ere Curtis could continue his remark, or Hilda Watson respond to it, a voice broke in upon them, a voice at once smooth and insolent.

"Good evening, Miss W.," it said. "You've given me quite a chase. I popped in to buy some cigarettes and you slipped by, I suppose. Pleased you've had company—introduce me."

The speaker was the man Curtis had encountered at the cash-desk, in spite of his flashily correct attire and flaring jewellery, the vulgar violinist of the Dirricomb pocket-picking gang.

Curtis recoiled. His tone to Hilda Watson had been familiar, even intimate. The mandoline player perceived it and grew white. Then, in a tone that was strangely hard and cold, she complied with the newcomer's request.

"Mr. Curtis," she announced; "this is Mr. Charles Weldon, musician, thief and blackguard, and only a fortnight out of gaol, after serving two months for abetting larceny. I am past redemption, you see, since he is able to claim acquaintance with me."

The person thus brutally depicted spat out an oath. "Shut up, you jade!" he hissed; "or I'll pay you, curse me if I don't."

Hilda Watson flung off the hand he had laid on her wrist. "You shall persecute me no longer, Charles Weldon," she declared. "If you follow me I will have you arrested. As for Mr. Curtis, let him forget that ever we met or that he is responsible for saving my wretched life."

The young surgeon would have delayed her, but she caught her instrument from him and was gone before he could protest. He saw that she mounted a bus rolling

towards Knightsbridge. With another oath, the ex-violinist faced in a similar direction and slouched down Piccadilly.

Pitiful, yet undecided, Allan Curtis hailed a hansom and was driven to St. Luke's Hospital. Duty is the best remedy for heartache. And he might truthfully have confessed to an attack of that extremely unprofessional malady.

CHAPTER III.

A MIRACLE OF CUPID'S.

"WILL Mr. Curtis come to the accident ward at once, please. There's a serious case just in."

The message was received from the ear-piece of a short-distance telephone by a nurse in her neat print working costume. She threaded the aisle between the rows of beds and delivered the request to Allan Curtis, who was paying an early evening visit to an interesting patient. He nodded absently, gave her some instructions, and strode out of the tall and airy apartment into an adjoining one.

A ward nurse met him as he entered; it was she who had sent the summons. "A lady, sir," she said explanatorily, "quite young and pretty, poor thing. She's been stabbed in the right shoulder, high up, but the hæmorrhage is rather bad. They brought her in a cab from Kensington, and that hasn't done her any good. But she asked, they say, to be taken to St. Luke's, so they humoured her. She's in Number Six."

A shiver passed over Allan Curtis; a half-conscious thought flashed through his mind. He hurried to the side of the indicated bed. In it there lay a deathly white face and languid form—the face and form of Hilda Watson.

As he looked at her astounded in spite of his sudden premonition, she opened her eyes and smiled wanly. "I'm so glad you've come," she faltered; "you see—he—he did pay me out, as he said he would. He followed me in a cab, got ahead of me and caught me as I was going into my rooms. But—but he got away."

Curtis struggled for his self-possession and began to examine the wound through which so much of the mandoline player's life blood had ebbed. It was narrow but terribly deep—the lung had been undoubtedly pierced. The young surgeon plugged and bandaged it with infinite care and skill, but with a heavy heart. The injured girl's breath was short and broken, her pulse alarming. He motioned to the nurse, who fetched a screen to put about the bed. It hid the doctor and his patient from the inquisitive gaze of the other inmates of the ward.

Hilda Watson glanced at it. "That means I'm dying, doesn't it?" she murmured with difficulty. "I guessed I was when I fell down. So I asked to be brought here—I wanted to see you again."

"You mustn't talk," Curtis got out, "it's bad for you. Nor must you despair—there—there's a good chance yet for you." It was a kind falsehood, and yet it hurt him to lie to her.

The mandolinist made a vague gesture of dissent. "I don't want to get better," she said; "I'm all alone in the world—and—very poor, and I've not been well lately. That—that thing at Dirricomb; you didn't give me an opportunity to explain. I—I only answered an advertisement for a mandoline player in a seaside troupe. I didn't know they were thieves, at first. And then Weldon took a fancy to me, and—and wouldn't pay

me all my salary, so's to keep a hold over me. I know I ought to have left them, but it was hard to lose my money I had worked for—and—and I liked Dirriecomb—and—and swimming. I was sorry though that you should see him with me this afternoon. He's been worrying me ever since he came out—to be fond of him. But there, you always thought badly of me."

"Forgive me," gasped the young surgeon. He was wrestling with something more than pity. He felt that he had loved this brave, solitary woman for the past two months—loved her as a memory, as a dream. Yet all that time she had been really unknown to him. And now she had revealed herself as she was—a simple, sensitive, honourable girl. She had vindicated herself—only to die!

Hilda smiled once more and groped for his fingers.

"I'm frightened a little," she whispered feebly, for her long explanation had weakened her. "You helped me in the current. May I hold your hand now?"

Curtis clasped her nerveless palm and turned away his head. He could not see her die. With his free hand he brushed away a tear. Hilda did not observe the action; her dark lashes had drooped over her large pupils. But the soft smile lingered round her mouth.

Moment after moment stole by. The quarter became half-an-hour, the hour a whole one. Yet Hilda Watson breathed, breathed faintly but smoothly. At last she sighed heavily. Allan Curtis looked at her. Her lips were parted and her bosom rose and fell. She was sleeping. There was even a rose-leaf flush upon her cheeks.

An iron band seemed to loosen about the surgeon's heart; for an instant he fancied he would faint, so overpowering was the revulsion of feeling. Then he collected his professional dignity, and, extricating his fingers from those of the slumbering girl, he rose and crossed to the nurse.

"She will do," he said coolly. "For a while it was touch and go. I will see her again after dinner. Keep the ward as quiet as you can. And—there's a good soul—don't gossip."

Gossip, however, there was in plenty, both then and thereafter. For that day three months Allan Curtis married Hilda Watson, and all the medical students and half the nursing staff of St. Luke's went to the wedding. The other half attended the reception, by special request.

Mr. Charles Weldon succeeded in making his escape from justice. Nor were Mr. and Mrs. Curtis sorry, since it saved them the annoyance of figuring in a newspaper sensation.

"My son," said the old gentleman who had been asked about his boy, "is deeply interested in law just now." "Ah! In a lawyer's office, I presume?" "No! in the criminal court."

"I AIN'T going to school any more," said a discouraged urchin. "Why?" tenderly inquired his mother. "'Cause it 'tain't any use. I can never learn to spell. The teacher keeps changing the words every day."

"I SUPPOSE you told her that she was the only girl you ever loved?" "Of course not. What kind of a fool do you take me for? Do you suppose I wanted to ruin my reputation for truth and veracity at the very outset?"

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The GOLDEN DWARF

A Sensational Romance of To-Day.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "A Keeper of Secrets," "Hate, the Destroyer,"
"A Daughter of Mystery," etc.



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF "GOLDEN DWARF."

"It is the body of Sir Christopher Dering!" The words are spoken by a pretty girl—fair-haired, blue-eyed. She stands, horrified, by a grass-grown ditch in a country lane, out of which a great mastiff is climbing. The ditch contains the corpse of a stalwart man—a handkerchief bound over his mouth and nostrils.

Close to there is a strange figure, graceful, well-dressed, even handsome, but with the stature of a boy and the face of an adult. He carries a heavy dog-whip, and stares, fixedly, at the dead body just discovered by his mastiff, Cerberus.

The girl is Esther Carew; the dwarf, Otto Hare, the richest landowner in Derbyshire, and the mystery of Wyresdale, a village in that county. For the first time in fifteen years he has set foot in a public thoroughfare, to attract the attention of Esther, whom he has watched from his park.

Sir Christopher Dering was alive at seven o'clock the preceding day. He and his nephew, Felix, had quarrelled over the latter's love for Esther. Sir Christopher wanted Felix to make a good marriage—the birth of his little cousin Brian has put him out of the succession to the barony. Felix is faithful to the penniless Esther Carew.

Much turns on the whereabouts of Felix on the night before. It appears that he was in Duxchester, some miles off, whither he went on business, and spent a night at the theatre. Could he have killed the squire?

Felix in vain protests his innocence. But the cloud of suspicion gathers around him. Meantime, the child Brian has been kidnapped, and Felix is suspected of this too. He discovers a riding whip with some peculiar marks upon it.

One day an old sailor named Foley is attacked by Otto Hare's dogs.

Kraft is summoned to dress the wound, and gives Foley a draught, which rests in his death.

Judith Garland resumes her threats against Dering, who replies by saying he knows the guilty parties. Goggles is offered from an analysis that Kraft had poisoned Foley, but is trapped and captured by unknown gongles.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH A CHESTNUT TROTS.

"WHAT has brought you down here?—surely after all that happened during your last visit you might have seen the prudence of giving Wyresdale a wide berth."

Judith Garland had just closed the door of the library at Dering House, and advanced into the apartment. Against the large carved mantel-piece her brother was lounging—he answered her fretful question with a sneer.

"If you particularly want to know," he said, "the same influence that fetched me down once before—that of a German blackguard named Kraft, Dr. Joseph Kraft, to be polite. He is a retired medico, a friend of Mr. Otto Hare's, the Golden Dwarf, whose mongrels you warned me about that morning at the cross-roads."

His sister looked at him, and a characteristic disdain curled her lip. "Well, you are a fool, Neal," she retorted; "I wouldn't blame you for keeping a card up your sleeve if you understood how to play it. But you must be a born bungler to conceal from me your acquaintance with Dr. Kraft. He called on me a while ago and referred casually to you; I denied your existence."

Neal laughed. "Oh, I'm posted up in your little tarradiddle," he said; "I saw Kraft in London afterwards and the beggar sprang it on me. But don't talk of bungling; you were to get a hold on Dering and make his gooseship lay the valuable eggs we promised ourselves. You've registered precious small progress."

Judith took a seat near her critic. "I miscalculated Felix Dering's strength of mind," she murmured, biting her pink nails; "he comprehends to a nicety the power of passive resistance. He will do nothing; he challenges us to do our worst. Recently," she added, and her face darkened, "I have been studying to revenge myself upon him—his slights have galled me to desperation."

Her brother drew himself nearer. "Judith," said Neal Garland, "you spoke of my bungling the card I had kept in my sleeve. You accused me too soon—the card is not yet played. Yet the game in which it is a trump affects you. That game, my dear revengeful sister, concerns the love of Otto Hare for Esther Carew, Felix Dering's best girl. My friend Kraft is bent on getting Miss Carew for Hare—he is Hare's jackal and parasite in onc. Now I—I am the ace of spades in Kraft's hand."

Judith Garland breathed heavily and her eyes glittered. "Go on," was her sole comment.

Neal rubbed his lean palms and chuckled. "Kraft," he proceeded, "not aware of the fact that I did see Dering in Wyresdale on the night of Sir Christopher's murder, has bribed me to say I did. He, of course, knows I was in the village then—I interviewed him very late the same evening. To be frank, I had come down the previous day in the hope of raising some cash out of him. The hope failed me and I wrote you for some, dating my letter from Pimlico—I wished to preserve my visit to Kraft a secret. I was in a fine rage when you twigged the post-mark."

The other was knitting her fingers indeterminately. "How," she demanded, "will your assertion, that you noticed Mr. Dering that night, affect Hare's chance of gaining Esther Carew?"

Neal grinned. "To save Dering from public scandal, and possibly the gallows," he explained, "she is expected to marry Hare for the purpose of silencing him. I am merely introduced to convince her that they have a witness to the damning point in question. So, you perceive, Dering may yet require a fair comforter."

Judith abandoned herself to thought. "What is there between Kraft and you," she asked, "that warranted you in expecting to extract money from him? You confess he has bribed you at last; at first he refused you—you are disingenuous, as usual, I will have the whole truth."

Hazel Harlow will be in Belfast next week.

Her brother's jaw set. "You will, will you?" he snarled; "curse you, drop the word, I won't have it. My business is *my* business, except when it directly concerns you, and this doesn't. I've told you everything you need learn."

A pronounced yawn was Judith's answer. "You make me tired, Neal," she told him, rising, "with your stupid duplicity. If we are to work together, trust me—if not, conduct the affair yourself. But recollect, I have you by a strong cord; if Dering was in Wyresdale that night, so were you—and you are a trifle less respectable than Felix Dering. It was you who took away Brian, it was you who disposed of the child."

Neal started up, his fists clenched. "You threaten me, do you?" he cried; "Keturah Schwartz was right—you would round on me if it suited you, as soon as not."

"And so you would on me," said his sister; "therefore we are quits. But as you won't be candid about Kraft, you won't. If I require to fathom your pretty mystery I will. And be sure of this, Neal, Felix Dering is mine, to betray if I choose, to spare if I choose. Sometimes I am in the mood to ruin him, sometimes I would barter him his safety and his freedom for a moment's tenderness, a simple token of regard."

Her keen orbs moistened with irrepressible feeling, and her firm scarlet mouth quivered feverishly. Neal watched her.

"Give him his freedom and safety," repeated her brother; "which means owning who took the kid, destroying the blood-stained links of his chain, warning him against me, and letting him marry the Carew girl. I won't do, Judith—I've got a stake in the matter. Not but what, if he'd any cash, I'd let him bribe me over Kraft's head. For a stiffish price, if he was on the virtuous lay, I'd sell him back the kid Brian."

There was a footfall in the room and both turned. Felix Dering, his movements deadened by the thick mat at the threshold, had entered the apartment. With a bow and a quiet apology, he passed to a book-rack, reached down a volume and left the library.

"Triple fool," muttered Judith; "what—what if he heard!"

"Not he," said Neal, abashed; "unless he was deliberately spying. But if he were he wouldn't have disturbed us at the mention of the kid's name. He'd have stayed to hear more. Not that his book mightn't have been an excuse."

Thus arguing, Neal approached the rack from which Felix had lifted a substantial tome.

"Volume four of Bruce's 'Evidence in Crimes and Misdemeanours,'" reported Neal; "bah! some magisterial job he's got charge of."

"Felix Dering is not a Justice of the Peace," demurred Judith, glancing shrewdly at the shelf; "see, it is the L to M volume that is missing. Dering's brain is still busy with one subject; the book he has carried off will contain a section on 'Murder.'"

As she spoke a clock on a bracket chimed the quarter after two. Neal started.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated; "I shall catch it if I don't skip—I have an appointment with Kraft at half-past. Ta-ta, Judith, keep a watch upon Dering, and write me if he tries any detective business on me. It's a bit thick, a common murderer posing as an amateur sleuth-hound. Luckily he doesn't know who I am, if he should have heard me mention the kid's name."

Judith pointed to the glass. "Look there," was all she said.

Neal did so. Both their faces were reflected in the polished crystal. There was no question as to the similarity; even an owl in broad sunshine could have discerned a kinship. The man winced. "Let

the boulder guess," was his decision; "we can bring him to his knees, if he should suspect the truth. Not that he's likely to, if you don't blab." The speaker caught up his stiff felt hat and clapped it on his brow. "You love this Dering," he added, with a fierce deliberation, "and Keturah Schwartz says no woman in love is a really safe pal so long as her chap's not in the gang. Now you fling us, either for Dering's sake or to spite him in some cat's fashion, and I'll make you sit up. Yours is too pretty a throat to cut, so take a hint from your affectionate brother."

A shudder ran through Judith: for her own ends and in the pursuit of a subtle plot to intimidate Felix Dering and, at the same time, to retain his respect by enlisting his sympathy, she *had* blabbed. She shrank from Neal aghast, a horrible sensation checking her breath.

Pleased by the effect of his "hint," Neal swaggered off, twisting his moustache, to thread the bye-lanes of Wyresdale on his way from Dering House to Wyresdale Park. He did not perceive that, as he went, a figure, on a chestnut gelding, kept pace with him by dexterous parallels and devious paths.

The expression of sinister content had not died from Neal's countenance when he rang at the massive portal of the Golden Dwarf's stately residence.

Ticked by his brutal empire over Judith, he was too absorbed to observe, in his usual acute manner, the smart dog-cart, that, harnessed to a fidgety bay mare of great size and strength, waited, under the charge of a trim groom, on the gravel terrace in front of the house.

The door swung wide, and Neal Garland, rousing, saw that in the splendid hall Joseph Kraft and Otto Hare were strolling side by side, one huge and meditative, the second diminutive and impatient.

While he entered, they turned, and the German strode forward, peering at his heavy chronometer as he came.

"Ah, there you are, my dear Mr. Garland," he cooed, softly; "punctuality is a virtue, for rogues as well as honest folk. We, on our part, are anxious not to waste your time; so, we anticipated your exactitude."

He motioned to the servant, who threw the doors wide.

"After you, Mr. Garland," observed Kraft, waving a plump palm in the direction of the dog-cart. Neal glanced inquisitively at the singular form of the Golden Dwarf, but climbed the vehicle, nevertheless. It had a double step—Otto Hare was compelled to use them both. Kraft followed and the groom completed the quartette.

Otto Hare caught up the whip and dashed off at a reckless pace, unconscious that, as the dog-cart whirled down the lower half of the avenue, a tall chestnut was walked out of a leafy by-path and cantered after it.

When the vehicle cleared the gates and swerved into the lane beyond, the chestnut had rounded the curve of the avenue; its rider noted the route selected by the Golden Dwarf. Some moments subsequently the former marked from the gates the turn taken by the bay mare at the top of the lane.

The Golden Dwarf drove with consummate skill but obvious impatience, Neal studied his handsome, delicate features and slender limbs. Otto Hare awakened to the scrutiny and frowned.

Near the Rosery he halted the bay mare, flung the reins to Kraft, and descended; Neal prepared to scramble down also. But the German laid a fat finger-tip on Neal's shoulder and arrested him.

"You are staying at the Wheatsheaf?" he said. Neal replied in the affirmative.

"Good," responded Joseph Kraft; "it is not far.

Tell your friends about Hazel Harlow.

When your task is over, Mr. Garland, I will accompany you to the Wheatsheaf for your bag, and then convey you to Duchester to catch the express. It leaves at four o'clock. You understand?"

"I suppose so," growled Neal, "and what about pay?"

Kraft patted a vest-pocket. "I have an envelope in reach," he said; "containing ten notes for twenty pounds each. We will transfer them as we go to Duchester. And now be off; Mr. Hare is waiting."

Joining the Golden Dwarf, Neal Garland went beside him through the Rosery garden. Once Otto Hare looked up.

"You have arranged everything with Dr. Kraft?" he queried, almost scornfully.

"Everything," admitted Neal, "but I don't like being hustled out of the place as though I couldn't be trusted."

Otto Hare shrugged his shoulders. "You should have told Dr. Kraft that," he retorted, and knocked at the neat entrance of the Rosery. Barbara opened to them and the Golden Dwarf led Neal Garland into Mrs. Carew's pleasant sitting-room. Its mistress was reading her inevitable novel; Esther was playing softly at the piano. Mrs. Carew started from her seat, and Esther, growing suddenly pale, abandoned the keys.

"My dear Mr. Hare," said her mother, with effusion, "what a delightful surprise!"

Otto Hare bowed. "May I introduce Mr. Garland?" he replied, "a friend of mine who I am anxious should make your daughter's acquaintance."

Mrs. Carew greeted Neal cordially, but Esther quailed as she encountered his insolent dark eyes. So much

did she fear the Golden Dwarf that her terror extended itself even to his associates.

Otto Hare drew Mrs. Carew away, leaving Esther and Neal together. Neal leaned over the piano—Esther had sunk upon her music-stool.

"I am here, ostensibly, Miss Carew," he began, "as a casual caller. In point of fact I have a duty to perform. I happen to be under considerable obligation to Mr. Hare and have travelled down from London at his request to make a short private statement to yourself."

At the mention of the Golden Dwarf Esther's cheeks had waxed deathly white; her wrist slipped from its resting-place on the rosewood cover and struck a shrill discord.

"In the night of Wednesday, the twenty-third of July last," added Neal, "I was coming from Wyresdale Park when I saw, purely by accident, a young fellow, in a tweed cap and suit, with tan riding-boots. He was walking, apparently seeking to evade observation by the cross-roads. I have been in Wyresdale now for a day or two and have seen him once more—I believe his name is Mr. Felix Dering."

Esther's blue orbs, wandering distressfully about the apartment, met those of Otto Hare. The Golden Dwarf smiled—a cruel, vindictive smile. Esther remembered his pledge at the garden-party, "In two days I will satisfy you of Dering's crime." This was the second day—and he had, indeed, revealed to her the depth of his power over the fate of her lover. There was a low moan and a fall, Esther, slipping from her seat, had swooned. Mrs. Carew hurried to her.

"Oh, these faints," she cried, supporting the girl upon her knee; "they grow more and more frequent."



Neal leaned over the piano—Esther had sunk on her music-stool.

Mr. Hare, I—I fear I must ask you to run away; it is better for her to recover alone. If you would kindly ring, Mr. Garland."

Neal obeyed and Mrs. Carew shot a fretful whisper to Otto Hare. "You always agitate her in this fashion," she murmured; "I—I almost begin to despair."

The Golden Dwarf surveyed the pallid visage of the motionless girl. "I think you have commenced to despond in the hour of victory, Mrs. Carew," he answered. Then, Barbara responding to Neal's summons, Otto Hare took the latter's arm and led him away.

At the earthen kerb close by, the dog-cart waited—the groom had changed his position, and held the reins while Kraft dozed beside him. The German leaned from his place as they approached.

"Well?" he demanded. The Golden Dwarf laughed—an icy, pitiless merriment.

"Miss Carew fainted suddenly," replied Otto Hare; "hence our brief stay. Mr. Garland, we part here, the Doctor will accompany you to your hotel and then to Duchester. Good afternoon."

He bowed to Neal as that worthy climbed to the back-seat of the dog-cart. When it drove off he was still gazing at it, his features wrinkled by their cruel laughter.

As the vehicle diminished in the vista of the macadam thoroughfare, a chestnut gelding was spurred from an adjacent by-way and followed it at a swift trot. The rider was Felix Dering.

Half a mile further on, the dog-cart paused at the Wheatsheaf—a gaunt, brick-built public-house. Felix leapt the chestnut into a field and tarried behind a screening hedge. Its brief halt terminated, the dog-cart took the main road to Duchester. The gelding was spurred on to the macadam again, and cantered forwards, holding in sight the fast bay, the dog-cart, the groom, the fat German, and the figure of Neal Garland.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"MAD AS A MARION HARE!"

"I'm afraid you must wait a little for this, Barbara. Father is out just now, but he'll make it up and send it down immediately he comes in. We're—we're short-handed at present."

Barbara Proston, the trim maid-servant from the Rosery, gazed in astonishment at the pretty face of Connie Forester. It was tear-stained and pitiful, and the ripe nether lip trembled uncontrollably.

"Dear heart, Miss Connie," she said; "what is the trouble—you do look wretched, worse than Miss Esther, poor soul, and she's miserable enough. It's her prescription's for; Mrs. Carew called in Dr. Vavasour last night. Miss Esther was out of one faint into another."

Constance Forester wiped her eyes and sobbed. "I'm sorry about Esther," faltered the chemist's daughter, "but perhaps I'm a bit worse off than she is. I don't mind you knowing, Barbara: it's—it's Mr. Geddes. He went off yesterday afternoon and he hasn't been home since. We are afraid some—some accident has happened to him."

The other sighed. "Hope for the best, Miss Connie," she said; "I don't despair yet of hearing from my Ted, as was took out of the cell at the police-station six weeks ago, where he ought never to have been, for he wouldn't have hurt Sir Christopher to save his own life. Though I do dread harm's come to him, else he'd have written to me, sure."

Connie choked down her grief. "Of—of course I've no right to—cry over Mr. Geddes," she declared, "and if I'd the least scrap of self-respect I shouldn't do it. But he was so kind and cheerful and—you understand what father is."

"I'd worse luck," rejoined Barbara; "but as for you're not crying over Mr. Geddes, I'll promise he's thinking about you wherever he is. Why, Miss Connie, there's not a woman in Wyresdale that doesn't realise how it's been with you and Mr. Geddes. And if you have taken your time to say 'Yes,' it's what we all have to do, or what would people think of us?"

"People might think anything they choose," gasped Connie, "if he'd only come back. I wouldn't feel so frightened, but Wyresdale hasn't seemed the same place lately, what with murders and deaths and disappearances, it's as bad as London must be."

"True, for you, miss," agreed the maid-servant; "well, I'll be getting off—you'll send Miss Esther's medicine—not that medicine'll do her much good as long as she can't see Mr. Dering without creeping out at the kitchen door like a thief. Mark my words, Miss Connie, if her mother marries her to Mr. Hare, who isn't more than half a man at the most, she'll die. And so I'd tell the old cat, if I lost my situation through it."

With which valorous assertion Barbara departed, and Connie, retiring to the corner behind the dispensing-screen, perched herself on the top of a wooden stool and dissolved into tears. Her fit of passionate despondency was at its crisis when Caleb Forester walked into the shop. Connie leapt up and ran to him.

The chemist glanced at her anxiously and shook his head. "No news yet, my dear," he murmured. "Brasher was not at the station, but the sergeant in charge said he would ask him to step round as soon as he arrived. You—you mustn't weep like this, Connie, what will the Inspector imagine?"

"I hate the Inspector," snapped his daughter, plying a damp handkerchief; "if it hadn't been for you wanting me to sweeten him, Archie—Mr. Geddes and I might have understood one another by now."

"Then, for his sake, you must not be reckless," retorted the chemist. "As you wish Mr. Brasher to restore Geddes to you, and, more particularly, to me and the shop, don't awaken the demon of jealousy in his bosom. The green-eyed monster plays curious tricks, even with police-officers, and it was only yesterday I gave him formal permission to sue for your young affections. Recollect there is no great occasion for alarm—Geddes may have sprained an ankle, or wandered too far afield to return conveniently over-night."

Connie threw off her father's palm, which he had laid persuasively on her wrist, and darted into the shelter of the screen; Michael Brasher—upright, military, correct, was crossing the road towards the Wyresdale Pharmacy. He saluted Caleb Forester as he entered the latter's establishment.

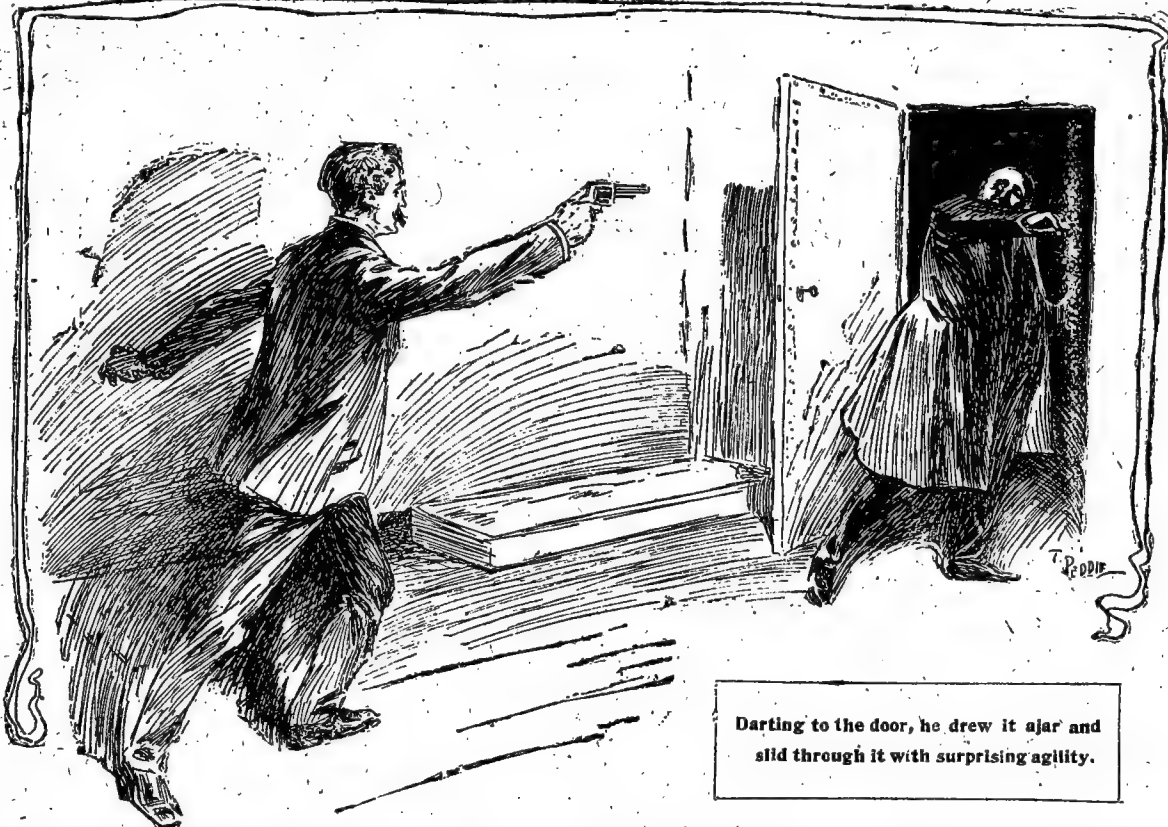
"Good-morning, Mr. Forester," he said; "I believe you were at the station five minutes back—sorry I was out. What's this I hear—something about Geddes having taken French leave?"

There was a stamp of a small foot behind the screen—Connie was dabbing her hot cheeks with her handkerchief, wetted under the dispensary tap, and had selected one means of expressing her view of the Inspector's observation.

"Not quite," responded Caleb, nervously, comprehending himself between two fires. Michael Brasher's jealousy and Connie's indignation; "Geddes went out yesterday afternoon, when he had summoned me to speak to you, in fact. Since then he has not been seen or heard of. As he was most regular in his habits, the thing is peculiar."

Mr. Brasher produced his pocket-hook. "Any idea of his probable movements?" demanded the Inspector.

"None whatever," explained the chemist; "but my daughter may have gathered, by chance, some indication of his purpose in going out. Connie, my dear."



Darting to the door, he drew it ajar and slid through it with surprising agility.

At the signal Connie marched from behind the mahogany panels, calm and indifferent. Michael Brasher bowed deferentially.

"Did you happen to learn from Geddes, my dear," queried her father, "where he was bound yesterday?"

"No," said Constance Forester, biting her lip to conceal its still obstinate tremor.

"Thank you," answered the Inspector, "have you noticed anything exceptional about his bearing of late—any suggestion of personal worry or ill-health?"

"No," repeated Connie, and Caleb echoed the disclaimer. Michael Brasher recorded them both.

"How was he dressed?" pursued the Inspector, "usual brown serge suit, I suppose, and stiff felt hat, as usual—Geddes was a conservative type. I'll trouble you in a moment, Mr. Forester, for a memo. of his under-clothing, so far as you know his wardrobe. Had he a stick or an umbrella?"

"He seldom carried either," said the chemist. Michael Brasher shrugged his shoulders.

"Ordinary costume, unknown destination," he summarised; "Not much to start on, is it? However, I'll do what I can, Mr. Forester. He may turn up on his own—he's been wrapping himself up a great deal in amateur detective work, with reference to Sir Christopher Dering's murder and the death of your brother-in-law, Mr. Forester—Foley, I mean, and I thought Geddes rather incoherent on the subject yesterday, I must admit—he had a dead mouse and talked of secret poisons."

Constance Forester stood pondering; when she roused it was to speak decisively. "Mr. Brasher," she said, with much coldness; "your sneers at Mr. Geddes are

his business and not mine. But perhaps I ought to tell you this. He had a curious article in the shop a while before he left—a thing like a revolver, but with a rubber bulb instead of a butt. He was filling part of the tube with ammonia—he explained that it was arranged to discharge the stuff at—at tramps or—or dogs—for self-protection."

Michael Brasher wrote down the item of information. "Looks to me a case of temporary aberration," he commented, "if you'll pardon my voicing the opinion, Miss Forester. He wasn't a cyclist, I think?"

Caleb Forester responded in the negative.

"Exactly," responded the Inspector; "what value would an ammonia-pistol be to him—unless, indeed, he wanted it for his amateur detective proceedings."

Mr. Brasher paused to stroke his smartly-cropped Geddes' clothing," he said; "in the next half-hour, beard. "You can let me have a full inventory of Trot your boy round with it. Good-day, Mr. Forester," he added; "good-day, Miss Connie—I will communicate any clue I get upon."

Saluting deliberately, Michael Brasher strode into the High Street; he muttered to himself as he stalked down it.

"Mad, for a thousand!" he said; "mad as a March hare. That is what comes of trying to be cleverer than the practised brains of an intelligent police-force. Yes, my canny Scot, I shall find you in a ditch with straws in your curly brown locks. You'd better have stuck to your pills."

The Inspector was referring to no less a person than Archibald Geddes.

(To be continued.)

Hazel Harlow will be in Belfast next week.



WHEN Matthew Stoneleigh set his mind on having a thing he usually got it in the end, no matter how impossible it seemed at the outset. But the less said about the means he employed the better. He was a music publisher by profession, and had built up a business of enormous proportions; one, moreover, which still continued to grow. What Stoneleigh had on his mind would have kept most men awake at nights, but he contrived to sleep like a top. Strange tales could have been told of certain business-like transactions in which he had had a hand. Struggling composers had received a few pounds for work which had afterwards yielded him the same figure in thousands. This fact did not prevent him from posing as their benefactor.

He was terribly ambitious and inordinately vain. His first ambition had been to get rich. Money, he told himself, was power. And now he was rich, but not satisfied. Certainly he had acquired power, but hardly the sort which suited his fancy. Society's doors, open to many composers of songs he published, were closed to him. Now, he was of the opinion that there was not half so much difficulty attached to composing a song as to selling the same. Still, that was neither here nor there. He wanted to get into Society. It was his supreme desire, as, indeed, it had been the ruling passion of many before him. By this time he was firmly convinced that money could not furnish the *entree*, but it occurred to him that ability might. What was he to do?

He made up his mind to become a composer. He was in possession of more than ordinary musical gifts, or he had not risen to the position he now occupied; but he lacked the creative faculty. However, a large number of manuscripts passed through his hands, and by these he profited. He composed songs, though how much of these productions traced their origin to his own head was a question. He chuckled to find that the composition of a single song had earned him more honour than the publication of a hundred and one had done.

One morning he was seated in his private office, on the best of terms with himself, when a clerk came to him

with a lady's card.

Close on the clerk's heels followed the owner of the card, no less a personage than Madame Carruthers, England's premier soprano.

Stoneleigh bowed low, as much to conceal a look of exultation as to express his homage.

"I want a song," said the lady, coming immediately to the point of her visit. "Not an old one, mind. I desire to know if it is in your power to furnish me with a new one which will exactly suit my voice. You are acquainted with my style. Really, I have not had a satisfactory ballad for ages."

"That is not surprising," said Stoneleigh, "since it is impossible to produce a melody worthy of your interpretation."

Madame laughed, but did not seem displeased.

"Just think of Constantine, the tenor," she continued. "The song he got from your house last autumn has turned the heads of half the musical world. Can you not serve me as you have served him? I declare that my stock of songs is growing quite stale."

Stoneleigh appeared to be turning something over in his mind.

"May I venture to offer you a song I myself have composed?" he asked presently.

"Oh! certainly. Charmed to try it, I am sure. Have you it with you?"

"No. The fact is, it happens to be in my head at present," he said, with a covert smile. "I have not yet committed it to paper."

"When can you let me have it?"

"In eight days, if that will be soon enough."

"Say five. To-day is Monday. Can you manage it by Friday night?"

"It shall be at your house by then," he replied.

She took her departure.

"The chance of a lifetime," murmured the publisher, the moment he was alone.

Presently the door reopened, and his clerk appeared a second time.

Tell your friends about Hazel Harlow.

"Well, Johnson?" he inquired, slightly raising his eyebrows.

"That fellow Macdonald is here again, sir," said the clerk. "Can't get rid of him anyway."

"What's his game this time?"

"Can't guess. Says he wants to see you most particularly, and has almost gone on his knees for an interview. Poor beggar! he looks as though he's got to the last straw."

"Starving?"

"Not far from it."

"Hum! Better show him up."

The clerk did so.

"Well, what do you want?" demanded the publisher, when Macdonald and he were alone.

"I've brought a song to show you, sir," said the newcomer, in a husky voice; "and I want you to consider it. Oh, sir, I beseech you to give it a trial. You will never regret it, I assure you."

"Hum! I suppose it's similar stuff to the rot you've thrust on me before?"

"No; it is the best thing I have done in my life, and the only hope I have left. Oh, sir, I am starving, and I have not only myself to consider. There is my wife and my little lad. I beg you to help me for their sakes."

"Why don't you turn your hand to something else, instead of wasting your time composing songs that won't sell? Why don't you get coals in, or clean windows, or sweep a crossing? Either of these will prevent you from starving."

Macdonald was silent.

"I haven't time to bother with you," continued the publisher. "Take your precious song elsewhere and leave me alone."

"I have already been with it to eight publishers, and not one of them will see me."

"Hum! You've failed elsewhere, and now your only chance is to fall back on me, eh? This is what comes of me being tender-hearted."

"Mr. Stoneleigh!" said the man, with sudden passion, "If you send me away, do you know what I shall do?"

"No idea."

"I shall tear my song up, and then I shall go to the dogs."

"Tut, tut. Empty words, my dear fellow. However, I suppose I shall have to look at your precious song." (He had intended to do so all along.) "What's it about? Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears!' Phew! What a coincidence. I happen to be setting the same words to music myself. But leave your manuscript, and I will consider it."

"And when may I call for your decision?"

"Oh, in about two days."

"I trust it may be favourable, sir."

"Anyhow, you will not be kept long in suspense. Good-day."

An hour's study convinced Stoneleigh that Macdonald's song was a veritable masterpiece.

"Good idea, that of mine, to say I was setting Tennyson's poem," he told himself. "Rather rough on Macdonald, I must confess, but it's entirely the beggar's own fault. Besides, he'll pull through all right, and if he turns his attention to a more lucrative employment I shall have simply done him a kindness. When will idiots learn sense?"

Macdonald remained idle during the two following days, his state of mind putting any work of

importance out of the question. He was passing through deep waters. Most of the time he sat staring into the fire, his elbows supported by his knees, his chin buried in his hands. At length the hour of his appointment with the publisher drew near.

"You will not be long away, Richard?" said his wife, handing him his hat. "I shall count the moments till you return."

"If it is accepted I shall be back in half an hour," he said.

"And if not?" She just managed to whisper the words.

A look shot into his eyes which terrified her.

"I—I—don't know," he stammered, "what I shall do."

He walked out of the room. Her hand flew to her heart. Oh! what—what would her husband do if his manuscript were rejected? In the hour of her direst need her eyes rested upon her son (a lad of ten summers), who was carving quaint figures out of cork with a small pocket-knife. She darted to his side, caught his arm and cried:

"Quick, Charley! Attend to what I say. Run after your father. Don't let him know you are following him. He must not be out of your sight a single instant. You understand? Now run. Make no mistake."

A look of comprehension dawned in the boy's eyes, and, grasping his cap, he hastened out of the room.

Some time later Macdonald was ushered into Stoneleigh's private office.

"Oh! take a seat," said the latter, without raising his head. He was writing a letter.

The composer did not sit.

Stoneleigh finished his letter, inclosed it in an envelope, and put his pen behind his ear.

"Well, I've tried over your song, Macdonald," he said, moistening the envelope flap with his tongue.

There was a blank pause. Stoneleigh was hoping there would not be a scene.

"And—er—I'm sorry to say it, you know, but there's absolutely no way out of it—"

He placed the envelope on his blotting pad, addressed it, and then tossed it aside.

"The fact is—er—your song is nothing whatever in our line. So I am reluctantly compelled to return it to you."

He opened a drawer at his right hand, took out the manuscript, and extended it to its author.

"I won't have it!" cried Macdonald, with a choke in his voice.

"My dear fellow! You—Halloa!"

The door had opened a few inches, and a boy appeared in the aperture. It was Charley, who had somehow eluded the clerk's vigilance, and was bent on fulfilling his mother's injunction to the letter.

"Here's a queer pass," said the publisher. "Who are you, I should like to know?"

"Please, sir, this is my father," said the boy, utterly at a loss for another answer.

There was a moment's inaction, which afforded Stoneleigh an opportunity of gently, but firmly, forcing the song upon the unwilling Macdonald.

Then an unexpected circumstance happened. Macdonald, almost maddened by the torture he was enduring, dashed the manuscript to the floor and fled from the room.

"How confoundedly awkward," exclaimed Stoneleigh.



Madame ran to the bell and placed her hand on it.

His eyes fell upon Charley, who was following in the wake of his distracted parent, and an idea was conceived.

"Hi! boy! half a minute. Take this song to your father, and here's a shilling for you. That's right; stuff it up your coat. Now cut."

This time the publisher's inward comment was: "How decidedly fortunate."

The same night, upon reaching home, he took a roll of manuscript from his desk. It was an exact copy of Macdonald's song, and the end he now had in view was to make many cunning alterations, write out a fresh copy, and then claim the composition as his own work. The fruit of his endeavours was a song similar to Macdonald's, yet not the same.

Did he feel any remorse by reason of having wronged Macdonald? Not he! Selfish to the heart's core, no thought of another's suffering crossed his mind, or had disturbed him, if it had done so. His only fear was lest Madame Carruthers should disapprove of the song he was taking her. Yet the more he thought of the song, the more he regarded as unlikely that she would be anything but charmed. This accounted for the confidence he manifested as he made his way to her house at the end of the allotted time, a confidence almost disdainful.

Yes, madame had given orders for him to be admitted to her presence. He followed the footman like one in a dream, seeing before him the attainment of his ambition. Presently he was bending over his patron's hand, voicing the gratitude he experienced on account of the signal honour she was conferring upon him. But she regarded

him coldly. Something in her attitude should have warned him of impending calamity.

"You've brought the song, I suppose?" she said.

He handed her a case. This she unfastened and with drew the inclosure. She opened the song and ran her eyes down the first page. What was that expression dawning on her face? Surprise? Nay, bewilderment. An adroit movement caused her to stand with her back to her companion. It was well he could not see her face.

The publisher had seated himself on the softest of chairs, and was gazing around the room appreciatively. A beautiful room, very large, and artistically appointed. In one corner, quite twelve yards away from him, was a grand piano and a piece of music open on it. He was curious to know the name of the song the distinguished soprano had been practising, but his eyes could not span the distance.

Madame still had the manuscript in her hand, but she was not studying it. Her busy brain was formulating a scheme whereby to compass a most desirable end.

Presently she approached the piano, removed the song, and in its place put the one the publisher had brought.

"Will you be so kind as to play it for me?" she requested.

He bowed and seated himself at the piano. The next moment the room was filled with melody, to which madame listened almost spellbound.

"Exquisite!" she murmured, when the last note had died away. "If it would not be trespassing on your

Hazel Harlow is in Rugby this week.

generosity, there is another song I should like you to play for me."

"Delighted," he said, and she placed the song in question before him. It was Macdonald's manuscript!

Stoneleigh went white, and beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. He was a man difficult to rob of self-control, but there was a limit to his endurance.

"Why don't you play it?" inquired Madame Caruthers, with simulated surprise.

What could he say? What could he do? The lady's move was so powerful that nothing, absolutely nothing, could stand in face of it.

"Stoneleigh, the game's up," she said. "And now I know that reports which I refused to credit are true."

Stoneleigh saw a picture of himself thrust from the society of pure women and honourable men. He sprang to his feet, a bitter curse on his lips. Madame ran to a bell and placed her hand on it.

"If you move, I ring," she said calmly.

He did not move.

"Don't ring yet," he said hoarsely.

Her hand fell to her side.

"What shall you do?" he asked.

"Proclaim you to the world for what you are."

"Who will believe you?"

"Who will disbelieve me?"

He took a step forward. Her hand flew to the bell. He stopped.

"Have you a price?"

She shook her head.

"You have not spared others, and you shall not be spared. You have had your day, and the reckoning time has come. You felt sure that you had seen the last of Macdonald's manuscript, but Fate ruled otherwise."

"I could have believed anything but that he would come to you with it."

"He didn't come to me. Two days ago, as I was driving from the city, a block occurred, and upon lowering the glass I perceived a crowd and a policeman emerging from their midst bearing the unconscious form of a boy, who, it transpired, had been knocked down by a passing vehicle. I offered the use of my carriage to convey the sufferer to the nearest hospital. Upon being informed that the boy was not really hurt, but only stunned, I decided to take him to my house instead."

"Now comes the most curious part of the whole affair. When I removed my patient's coat I discovered the manuscript of a song. Need I say more? Perhaps a few words may not be out of place. I tried the song and was charmed by it, and that same night I dispatched a messenger to bring the father and mother of my patient to their son, having got their address from the song. Macdonald shall receive the recognition he deserves, and as for you, what I now know others shall know before many days are past. The wrong you have done shall be redressed."

The following night the newsboys were shouting: "Mysterious disappearance of Matthew Stoneleigh."

SCIENTISTS claim that smoking injures the eyesight. But this is not true. The boy with a stump in his mouth can see his father ten streets away.

WATTS: "It is a lucky man who can truthfully say that he has lived with his wife for ten years without her once calling him a brute."

POTTS: "I can make just that boast—that is, if you except the occasions when she has insisted that I was a donkey."

A POLICE INSPECTOR'S DAUGHTER

SAYS BILE BEANS SAVED HER LIFE.
ULCERATED STOMACH, INDIGESTION AND DEBILITY CURED
SEVEN YEARS OF TORTURE ENDED.

From the brink of the grave to perfect health is a tremendous change. Yet this is the change which Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness have worked in Miss Jenny Newton, daughter of the late Police-Inspector Newton, of Grove Street, Wakefield. Here is her own story as a Wakefield Herald reporter had it from her lips: "I have been a mar yr to indigestion and ulcerated stomach for nearly seven years. It would startle people were I to write down the list of so-called remedies that I have tried for my complaint. I went to the Clayton Hospital for two years, and the doctors at that institution did me some little

good, but only for a very short time. Then I was treated by three well-known doctors in Wakefield, but none of them did me any real good; and I became very weary and downcast. Abandoning hopes of obtaining a cure by consulting medical men, I commenced with patent medicines, and on these my mother has spent a small fortune. It was all to no purpose, however. I became thin, weak and emaciated—a very wretched-looking object, I know, and no wonder, I could eat nothing for weeks. Nothing would stay on my stomach, and for a long time I lived on hot milk alone. My head was always aching, as was my body; I had terrible pains in the region of my stomach and heart; I lost flesh rapidly and I could not sleep. I felt always low-spirited, and I got so bad that I could not go upstairs without stopping once or twice to rest. I felt as though I didn't care whether I got better or not. My mother had given up all hopes of my recovery when one day she saw an advertisement about Charles Forde's Bile Beans, and what wonderful cures they had effected in some cases. She bought a box and I began to take them right off. In a few days I began to pick up splendidly. It was really marvellous! All the pains I had gradually disappeared. I commenced to sleep soundly, and got up refreshed; began to take solid food, and to be able to digest it. I kept on with the Beans, and as the result I was soon perfectly well again. I can now eat and digest any food. This I owe to Bile Beans entirely! They are worth their weight in gold! Nearly everyone who has seen me has asked what it is that has brought about the great change, and I have told them with the utmost possible pleasure."

Miss Newton's mother, who was present, brought the interview to a close with the remark: "You may tell everybody if you like, that Bile Beans, and nothing else, have saved my daughter's life! She is now a bright and happy girl."

Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are without doubt superior to all known medicines for stomach disorders and diseases, indigestion, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, headache, debility, nervousness, anemia, female ailments, chill, rheumatism, pimples, face sores, as a restorative after influenza, as well as for palpitation, pains in the chest, difficulty in breathing, and pains between the shoulders. All chemists stock Bile Beans, or you may obtain direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120, London Wall, London, E.C., by sending price, 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. per box (2s. 9d. box contains three times 1s. 1½d.).

A FREE SAMPLE will be forwarded if you write for same to above address, enclosing a penny stamp to pay postage, and mentioning this paper.



THE SEA'S RESTITUTION.

THE third day out from Havre a fog came up and made the world opaque. For two days it did not lift or thin, and it was difficult to believe, in spite of the log, that the ship was making any headway at all. It seemed almost as if the world had ceased to be, or as if it existed but in a state of flux, and as if we enchanted ones, accursed with an immunity from the common destruction, were left to contemplate the nothingness.

Then, to add to our sense of doom, a young baby was said to have died on shipboard. At first everyone took it for granted that its mother must have been a steerage or, at the least, a second cabin passenger. It seemed unlikely that death would be so impertinent as to enter the first cabin. But it was learned that the destroyer had been even more insolent than that—it had taken a child much favoured of fortune, the heir to great wealth.

I went to visit Mrs. Morell, the child's mother. She was tall and white, with wide eyes, which must have been beautiful when she was happy. Now a sort of blankness, like that of the air and the sea, had come into them.

I could not see her soul for her sorrow. She offered no confidence; indeed, my sympathy could not reach to her dulled sense. Her grief was between us, impenetrable as the fog through which the ship crept cautiously.

"The captain asked me if I would be willing to have my baby buried at sea," she said to me in a voice which reminded me of a mournful bell, "and I told him I had no objection whatever."

"No!" I ejaculated in amazed surprise.

"Nothing is more peaceful than the depths of the sea," she responded, and it being night she asked me to walk upon the deck with her under cover of the darkness.

More in sympathy than from curiosity I inquired:

"Your husband is awaiting you in America?"

"Yes," she replied, her voice strangely colourless. "He will be at the wharf. He will expect to see the baby in my arms. He has never seen the baby, you know. I have been with my mother, who lives in Paris, and the day that baby was three months old I started for home."

We paused by the bulwark and she looked down into the shadowy trough of the wave.

"It will make a soft cradle," she said. Her courage wrung my heart.

"Where do you find the strength to endure such a grief?" I cried.

"Indeed," she responded, with the mournful shadow of a smile, "that I cannot tell. It does not seem as if it were really I who has met with this great misfortune. If it were I whose plans have been so altered and whose hopes have been so dashed, surely I would not be tearless like this. It is Adele, my nurse, who weeps."

The next morning the captain read the burial service with solemn accent, and into the colourless sea, through the white vacancy of the fog, the little one was lowered reverently. I stood beside the mother, and I would have sustained her with my arm but that she gently repulsed me. She swayed a little from side to side, but there were no tears on the face that looked out of the quaint pointed hood of her sea cloak. She stared ahead of her at the stupid fog—she looked baffled, into obscurity.

Suddenly, an hour after the funeral, the mist lifted. It rolled up as a curtain rolls up, and it was a saffron colour, gleaming and splendid. When it had lifted, a sparkling sea was revealed and a cloudless sky. The world became radiant. It seemed to exult in its beauty. Mrs. Morell cast a look of reproach at this vaunting of nature's youth and joy and went to her cabin.

Through the day messages were sent her, and delicate evidences of sympathy, but her maid alone returned thanks. The next morning found her still in seclusion. More than one of us thought of invading that sacred solitude, but at the last forbore.

It was the afternoon of that day that the man on the bridge espied an object upon the horizon at the south. It was a black speck, visible in a short time to all of us.

"It's a ship's longboat," was the verdict at last. "It is manned and flying a flag of distress."

The course of our ship was changed. We went racing through the green water, rejoicing in the zest of the hour, in the action, the event.

Presently we were standing off cautiously from a longboat manned with haggard men.

"Who are you?" shouted the captain as the companion ladder was being lowered.

"All that are left of the crew and the passengers of the *Nina Celeste*, sir."

"How lost?"

"By fire, sir, two nights ago. The first boat lowered capsized. The women—there were two—were lowered into it. But the men were frightened, the flames made such headway, so they jumped. We are all who remain. Three of us were picked up from the overturned boat, but the others were dragged down in the swirl of the boat; it got to going round and round."

"Was the *Nina Celeste* a freighter?"

"A freighter, sir, bound from Bermuda to New York, carrying a cargo of lilies and hemp. It was out of its course owing to a fog."

The boat's load came on board—fifteen pale men—and one of them carried something in his arms.

"What do you carry?" asked the captain. "Is it a child?"

"Yes, sir. It is the babe of one of the women who were lost. I was just about to hand it down to her."

There was a sharp cry from among the crowd of passengers. Mrs. Morell was coming forward, her arms outstretched. She was entirely unconscious of the crowd apparently. Someone whispered to the man who held the babe:

"Her little one was buried yesterday at sea."

The man shuffled his burden awkwardly in his arms and took his hat from his head. Mrs. Morell reached him, and her hands seemed to hover above the coverings of the child's face as an avid bee hovers above a flower.

"It is alive!" she half whispered, after she had bent above it, all trembling. "It is breathing!" It seemed as if she thought that fact a sort of miracle.

She lifted the babe eagerly from the man's arms, and, straining it close to her, walked with rapid, uncertain steps toward her cabin, and as she went she, who had hitherto shed no tear, sobbed aloud.



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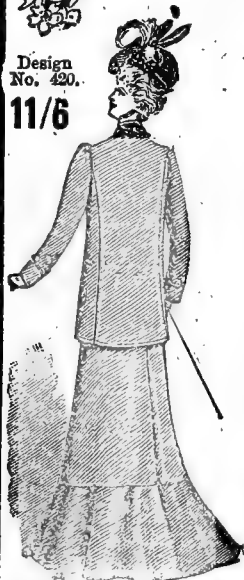
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Short Stories That Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source must be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, September 16th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. D. Magee, of 4 Lancaster Street, Belfast, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

"WILLIE, do you and your brother ever fight?"
"Yes, sir." "Who beats?" "Pa."

BELLA (cooly): "I have only seen twenty summers." Her Dear Friend (sarcastically): "Really? Why don't you consult an oculist?"

"THERE'S a lesson in that would-be epicure, who died after eating six pigs' feet." "What is it?" "That four feet are enough for any pig."

BOBBIE: "The lobster bites hard, but he must be very timid, mamma." Mamma: "Why so, Bobbie?" Bobbie: "Why, because he always wears his tail between his legs."

A NATIVE wrote this to an English missionary at Lagos, apologising for not coming to see him: "I had not distance preponderated, I should have approximated to see you."

MRS. NEURICH: "Why didn't you come when I rang the bell?" Servant: "Please, ma'am, I didn't hear the bell." Mrs. Neurich: "Well, hereafter, when you don't hear it, come and tell me at once."

"THERE is nothing like settling down," said the retired merchant confidently to his neighbour. "When I gave up business I settled down, and found I had quite a comfortable fortune. If I had settled up I should not have had much."

H.: "Is your boy fond of books?" D.: "Very. I gave him a copy of 'Robinson Crusoe' the other day and he got lots of fun out of it." H.: "I didn't know he could read." D.: "He can't read, but he tears the pages out and makes boats of them. Oh, yes, he's fond of books."

"DAD, were you ever a fish?" The individual thus addressed lowered his chin and gazed over his spectacles at the boy in speechless astonishment. "Oh, don't get mad at me, dad, for asking you," continued his inquisitive offspring. "Mrs. Cooly came in after you had gone yesterday, and asked ma what she would do if you were dead, and ma laughed and said she guessed there were just as good fish in the sea as you are."

* A NATIVE in Africa, who had been married by one of the missionaries, at the end of three weeks brought his wife back to the clergyman, and requested him to take her back. The clergyman asked what was the matter with her. "Why, sar, she no good. The book says she obey me. She no wash my clothes. She no do what I tole her." The Minister: "But the book says you were to take her for better or for worse." "Yes, sar, but she all worse, an' no better. She hab too much worse, an' no good 'tall."

MRS. WABASH: "Who is your favourite writer, Mrs. Ogden?" Mrs. Ogden: "My husband." Mrs. Wabash: "Your husband? Why, what did he ever write?" Mrs. Ogden: "Cheques."

PEDAGOGOS (severely): "Now, sir, for the last time, what is the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle equivalent to?" Boy (desperately): "It's equivalent to a licking for me, sir."

"I SHOULD like to see a nice fat goose," said a customer entering a poultry shop in a hurry. "Yes, sir," replied the little boy who had been left in charge. "Father'll be downstairs directly."

YOUNG WIFE: "Oh, I'm so unhappy! I am more and more convinced that my husband married me only for my money." Friend: "Then you have at least the consolation that your husband isn't so stupid as he looks."

LITTLE GIRL (weeping): "Somebody has stolen my doll." Mother: "Your doll? Which one?" Little Girl: "The oldest and nicest one of all; the one that didn't have any legs, or arms, or hair, or eyes, or anything."

OLD MR. GOODFELLO (addressing child): "Ah, what a pretty little one! Will you tell me your name, Miss?" Miss Hutton (age seven): "Nurse, if you have one of mamma's cards with you, will you kindly hand it to the gentleman?"

GOODFELLOW: "So you think John Gotrox's will is a masterpiece of legal ingenuity and acumen, do you?" Lawyer Sharpley: "Sir, I saw it; and I will stake my reputation upon that will's lasting in the courts as long as the property does."

HE: "Suppose I should ask your father if I could marry you. Do you think I would stand any chance?" She: "No; your case would be hopeless." "Do you think he would really say no?" "Not that; but he would leave it to me."

MUTUAL FRIEND: "It really is shocking, dear, the way in which you and your husband quarrel and carry on. I wonder you don't separate from him." Injured Wife: "What! go away and leave him alone to do just as he likes? Not me."

PAPA: "You saw that big boy beating the little one, and you didn't interfere? Suppose you had been that little boy?" Bobbie: "I did think of that, an' was going to part 'em; but then I happened to think, s'pose I was the big boy? So I let 'em alone."

HE was quite newly married, and when he returned home one day to find his wife in tears he was sorely troubled. "What are you crying for, Mary?" he asked. "Oh, John, I simply cannot help it! How those poor men must have suffered! That Jessop is a brute!" "Great Scott! What's he been doing?" "Haven't you read it? Why, it says that when he came in he started punishing the bowlers severely. He cut Hirst twice in his first over, and he knocked Haigh all over the field. Wainwright interfered, but he didn't do much good, because Jessop drove him to the boundary out of the way. Next Rhodes came up to see what he could do; but Jessop ran out to him and knocked him over the pavilion. Brown came on, and what do you think Jessop did to him? Why, he skied him, and I think he would have been killed, but, fortunately, a man with square legs ran up and caught him."

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

WHEN a young man's in love, he thinks of nothing else than his sweetheart. He wants to talk about her, and to extol her beauty. Likewise, when a young man has just had his firstborn presented to him, he tells all his friends about it, and generally makes himself a nuisance by recounting the child's latest achievements. This sort of thing may be annoying, but it's natural, and, therefore, excuses may be found for it.

Similarly, when an editor persists in talking about his paper, allowances ought to be made.

With these few prefatory words, I trust I may be pardoned for once more pointing out to you the fact that the

"ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS" are becoming more popular than ever. Readers in all parts of the country testify to their popularity.

Next week Miss Hazel Harlow will appear in Belfast.



ADVICE ON LOVE AND OTHER MATTERS.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

"DILEMMA" tells me that a year or so back he made the acquaintance of a charming young lady with whom he became fast friends.

"After keeping company for about ten or eleven months, she suddenly changed her mind and left me for another fellow. It caused me a lot of pain at first, then I thought to myself, 'Well, I am sure it has been all for the best, perhaps.' Since then she has been twice instrumental in preventing me from having another young lady. She told a friend she did not want me and yet won't let me have another? What am I to do? I still love her and will always do so, but can't for the life of me find out her motive in treating me thus. I am great friends with her family, and we are constantly together, which makes it all the more unbearable for me."

If I were you, "Dilemma," I should have a very straight talk with her. If she tells you seriously that she does not desire your further acquaintance, then your only course is to part with her for good. As to her preventing you becoming friendly with another girl, such "dog-in-the-manger"

policy is certainly strange. But surely if the other girl likes you she will take no notice of any words of your old sweetheart. In any case, have a correct understanding. You might let me know how you get on.

"POLLY'S" case is really one which needs great consideration. When fifteen years of age she made a vow to become a missionary. At that time the thought never entered her head that she might fall in love. That is precisely what has happened, however, and she is sure he cares for her, but she feels she would be doing wrong by breaking her vow. I do not think, "Polly," that a vow of that sort made at fifteen is really binding, as you are at that age scarcely old enough to understand it. Special qualifications are required to become a missionary, and from what you tell me about yourself, I think you are better fitted to look after a home of your own than some wider field in a far-away country.

"MOTHER OF SEVEN" writes a pitiful letter. She cannot help feeling intensely jealous as she sees her girls growing up and gradually taking her place in society. What can she do to stamp it out? I know it seems hard, "Mother," but think for a moment. When you were a girl you had your day, and now they have theirs. Be proud of them, take an interest in their pleasures, and you will find that your feeling of jealousy will disappear once for all.

You are quite right, "Trixie," in supposing that you may write to your former sweetheart and ask him to send your letters back, as he does not do so when you ask him personally. If he does not send them at the first request, you should write again and appeal to his honour. Of course, if he does not send them then you cannot do otherwise than let the matter drop. If you have written nothing you are ashamed of, you can afford to smile at a man who shows such a lack of good taste.

"JEHU" is very miserable. For years he has secretly loved the daughter of his master. He knows that by rights he ought to leave the situation and try for another, but cannot bring himself to do so as he feels the parting would be more than he could stand. She has no idea of his feelings towards her, and is a very proud young lady.

You are quite right, "Jehu," in

saying that you feel you ought to leave your situation; I see no other way out of the difficulty. Some day you will marry a nice girl in your own class of life, and forget all about this hopeless infatuation.

I CERTAINLY think, "Poppy," that your lover should write to you more often than he does, seeing that he is so many miles away. Only four letters in twelve months is indeed a very small number. I think he ought to write to you at least once a week. By-the-bye, you do not tell me how often you see each other. Next time you see him tell him how glad you would be if he would write more often. I shall be pleased to hear from you again.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I AM open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

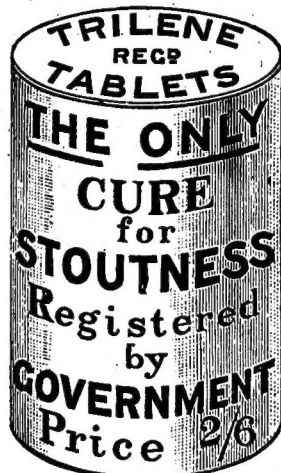
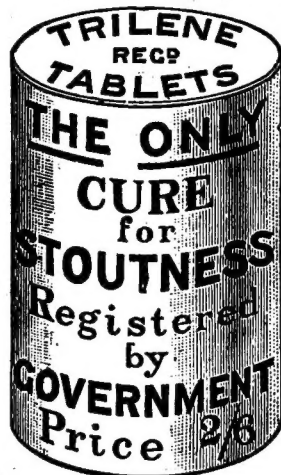
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to Improve both HEALTH and
FIGURE without change of Diet.

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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"57 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1898.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them: their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. B. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscope Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTRESS SECKENDORF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 11lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 11st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 10st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1898: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 8st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44 Caliste, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 14 stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col. SERGT. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LICHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 12st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, Mr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am 4lb. lighter, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 22 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devises, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

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